COLECO'S VCS MODULE
Which Games Won't Work?

21 NEW GAMES REVIEWED INSIDE!

STARTING THIS ISSUE:
Reviews from Our Readers!

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★ MORE!!!

Two New Releases from Atari for the 5200

VANGUARD is now available in a home video version for the Atari 5200 system. The game can be played by one or two players, with a choice of normal firing (pushing the fire button for each shot) or repeat firing (holding the button down for continuous firing). A demonstration mode lets you see the alien ships and obstacles that lie before you in the tunnel. If you lose your allotted number of lives before you get to the end of the tunnel, you can continue down the giant cavern without starting over by pressing the red fire button (this

Atari's 5200 is more exciting than ever with two new games and more on the way.

replaces feeding another quarter into the arcade game!). When you continue a game, you lose points that you have accumulated by destroying alien ships and obstacles. You can play VANGUARD for points or, to get to the end of the tunnel (or both, if you're extremely good). A cross-sectional tunnel map in the top right-hand corner of the screen keeps track of your progress through the tunnel.

The graphic display features all of the screens that were available in the 2600 version, and sound effects include the sounds of the engines firing, the rockets being launched and the musical jingles heard when your ship travels through a different zone, with explosions geared to rattle the television's speakers.

Atari offers a strategy tip or two: In the Rainbow Zone, protect the sides of your ship by rapid firing. A balloon is more likely to collide with the side of your ship than with the front or the back, so build a "wall of fire" to protect you. The Romeda ships in the Bleak Zone are easy to shoot down if you lay back and fire away. And, since your maneuverability is cut down by firing, when you get to the City of Mystery, you have two options. One is to blast away until you either hit Gond or are destroyed. The second option is to hold your fire, dodge the missiles and the barriers and wait to get a good shot in. The longer you

wait, the more points you earn if you destroy Gond. Atari describes hitting Gond as truly "delight" at the end of the tunnel.

SPACE DUNGEON is another arcade game coming from Atari for owners of the 5200 system, described by the company as having "all the game play, sounds and graphics of the arcade version." The game also features a demonstration mode to give players an idea of how (and how not to) play the game.

Atari 5200 SPACE DUNGEON can be played by one (using a special joystick holder that comes free with the game cartridge) or two players (with each using one of the two controllers). The object of the game is to collect treasure from various rooms while dodging and zapping various enemies. When you "cash in" your treasure for points, you move down to the next level of the Space Dungeon. With each level, the game becomes increasingly difficult.

According to Atari, the best key to success in Atari 5200 SPACE DUNGEON is to constantly be shooting, and to try to clear enemies and obstacles out of a room, in case you should have to return later. A good way to eliminate the corner zappers is to park your ship on top of one (thus destroying it) and fire at the other three. When you enter the Collect Bonus Room, try to slow down. If you run right into the Collect Bonus Cube, you might miss some treasure lying around it.

You are definitely advised to stay on Level One and shoot as many enemies as you can. You can also go directly to the "Collect Bonus" room and move as far down into the Space Dungeon as possible. You should also visit every room and gather up as much treasure as possible. When every room is visited on a certain level, you are awarded 10,000 points when you progress to the next level.

Treasure Hunt Winner Announced

Clever thinking and dedicated perseverance enabled Brian McGhie, a super sleuth won in yet another contest. One of his goals is to become a professional video game player.
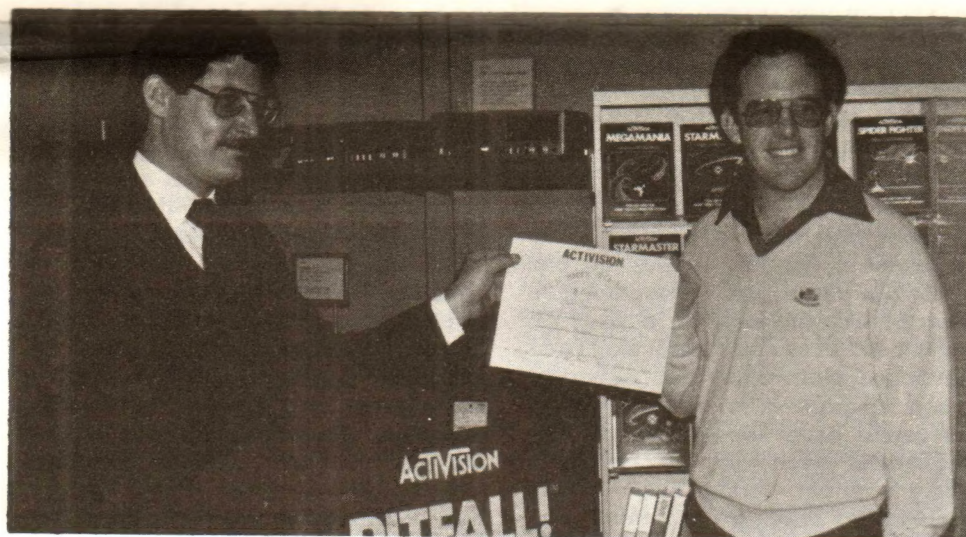
Brian McGhie (right), winner of the "PITFALL Treasure Hunt," accepted his prize from local merchant Josh Feverman (Left).

from Cupertino, California, to receive a $5,000 award from Activision on March 16, 1983, for solving the San Jose PITFALL TREASURE HUNT. The contest, held in eight cities nationwide, challenged contestants to follow weekly clues, provided by participating retailers and local radio stations, across a map to locate buried treasure.

Brian found that solving the extraordinary clues created by David Crane, designer of the Activision video game PITFALL, required extraordinary means. To find his way around Kong's Island Landmark, he rented a video tape of the movie KING KONG, and studied it until he could match up the clue. The effort paid off when he sent in the winning entry.

Brian is a whiz at the local arcades, where he plays MS. PAC-MAN, his favorite game. At home, he prefers to play RIVER RAID on his Atari VCS. He also owns a Colecovision, which he

Odyssey Sponsors TURTLES Drawing

Video game players can win one of 50 Odyssey Home Arcade Centers just by filling out an entry form for a "Win One for the Turtle" drawing to introduce Odyssey's new TURTLES cartridge.

The giant, six-foot tall arcade center includes a 15" Magnavox color television, the Odyssey-2 console and a TURTLES game. The console and television are set up on a display stand designed to look like an arcade video game.

The new TURTLES cartridge features all the action and humor of the arcade game of the same name. It's a part maze game, part shell game in which players try to guide the mother turtle to hidden baby "turtletts" without getting "bugged" by the beetles chasing her. It also features sound effects, when played with the Voice of Odyssey voice synthesis module.

Contest entry forms and TURTLES cartridges are already available at Odyssey dealers. The deadline for entries is June 30, 1983.

GAMEVIEWS

The Editor Speaks

by Alan R. Bechtold

Most of you know very little about my past. You might know that I've been reviewing virtually every video game cartridge made, and that I've been playing video games a long while now. You might even know that I grew up loving pinball machines. But you might not know that I came from a strong background in the science fiction and fantasy field. I founded a national workshop-by-mail for new and working writers in the field, then ran it for two years. The group is still going and I am patiently waiting to find the time to get more involved in it again. I'm looking forward to working on some more short stories and a couple of novels that have been rattling around in my brain the past two years, too.

Unfortunately, I won't be doing that for a while yet. Something else has grabbed — no — demanded my attention; video games.

Some of my peers are smirking. Have any of you read Harlan Ellison's review of Parker Brother's STAR WARS: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK? He made it perfectly clear that he hates all video games, thinks they are a useless waste of time and can't understand why anyone would spend good money on any of them. Period. Some review. Unfortunately, others in the SF and fantasy field feel the same way. It's too bad, but I know why and I think I understand.

You see, video games aren't the intellectual activity that reading is — not yet, anyway. They present a direct threat to the dwindling entertainment dollars and folks have had less dollars available to spend on books and movies lately anyway. It's easy to see how some who make their living from literary and musical endeavor might grow to resent your favorite past-time and mine.

Still, it bothers me to hear such closed-minded thinking. Writers and artists who condemn video games have forgotten how the very same blanket sentiments were delivered with earnest ferocity toward the field of their endeavor only a short while ago. People used to read SF books behind other, "more literary" tomes, and wrote them under pseudonyms, to avoid the possibility of public ridicule for "writing such trash."

Of course, anyone who's read any well-written, serious SF or fantasy knows there is some great stuff of the imagination there. The same goes for video games.

As I read all those great books, I get a vicarious thrill like no other I have ever experienced. They take me to other worlds, introduce me to strange alien races and put me in life-and-death situations that I will never face in real life. And they take me away from the troubles of the real world for a little while. That's why I like to read SF and fantasy. That's why I want to write some more of my own fiction. But not right now.

Right now I am deeply involved in video and computer gaming. Good video games put me right into the action, put me on new worlds, and force me to actually make the life-or-death decisions that I can only experience vicariously when reading.

Don't get me wrong. Some criticisms of the video games field are completely valid. There are too many games that require only hand/eye coordination. Too many games are too similar. Too few require deep thought to play. But, there are already a lot of video games that will stay classics for many years to come. The games we are playing right now were science fiction only a few short years ago, and I firmly believe they represent only the tip of the iceberg of what is yet to come.

The games we are now playing, for the most part, represent only the hard action scenes of fiction. Many are SF-in-the-rough. Most all of them lack the depth of character, philosophical statements, and comments on life today that contemporary fiction provides the reader. But all of them do put the player right in the scene.

And the best is yet to come. I see incredible possibilities for video gaming in the years ahead. Computer adventure games are already the modern-day equivalent of interactive novels, and they are becoming increasingly complex and sophisticated as time goes on. Information exchanges are currently offering co-op adventure gaming. Add to these possibilities the fact that 3-D simulations, voice interaction with the computer and more are already in the works, and you can only agree — we video gamers are experiencing science fiction come alive, right in our living rooms.

We can only hope that more of the brilliant minds that now create SF and Fantasy making it the outstanding fictional form that it is, will swallow a little pride and take a closer look at video games. Face it. Video games are competing with other forms of entertainment — because they are an art form that appeals to a large segment of the population. There is still a lot of ground-breaking to be done.

That I like!

Mattel Wins "Video ARTcade" Awards

Mattel Electronics won the highest honors in artistic excellence (a Gold Medal) for its Intellivision ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CLOUDY MOUNTAIN cartridge at the first Video ARTcade event, sponsored by the Corcoran Gallery and School of Art in Washington, D.C. The game was cited as "visually and graphically superior" by nationally-known artists William Christenberry, Sam Holves and Robin Rose.

Two popular Intellivision games also received Awards of Merit. FROG BOG was chosen because it "visually enveloped the viewer, forcing the mere observer to give up that role," and STAR STRIKE was acknowledged for its "multi-dimensionality and renaissance perspective."

The Video ARTcade event, called the first serious look at video games as an art form, featured a black tie dinner and awards ceremony. Celebrity video game players such as Susan St. James, Aaron Latham, Leslie Stahl, Jim Leher, Paul Duke, Bob Schieffer and Katherine Taylor challenged guests on the winning cartridges. The event also benefited the Corcoran Scholarship Fund, with contributions aiding needy art students.

"We're delighted Mattel Electronics has been recognized by the art community for one of our major software selling points," commented Peter Pirner, senior vice president of marketing for the company. "Intellivision has long been known for its graphic superiority, and these awards confirm that reputation." Pirner also mentioned that all three winning games will be available in similar versions for the M Network software line, which is compatible with the Atari 2600 video game system.

BEEFSTEAK TOMATOES Invade Several Formats

After weeks of protest, the Beefsteak Tomatoes launched a nationwide offensive. In a matter of days, these deadly tomatoes are expected to be demanding revenge in stores and on home video game systems across the country.

The Beefsteak Tomatoes have targeted the Atari VCS 2600, the VIC 20 and the Atari 400/800 home computer formats for search and destroy missions.

No one is quite sure what turned these previously harmless tomatoes into red-blooded killers, but one thing is certain. No weapon known to man can destroy them.

According to Frank O'Connell, president, Fox Video Games, Inc., the only way to stop the Beefsteak Tomatoes is to build walls around them. But — can enough walls be built in time to stop the tomatoes before they take over the world? REVENGE OF THE BEEFSTEAK TOMATOES is one of 12 titles from Twentieth Century-Fox Games of the Century.

SEND US YOUR NEWS!!!

Activision Releases Three

Activision, Incorporated, announced March 18 the release of two new games for the Atari VCS and similar systems, **DOLPHIN**, by designer Matthew Hubbard, and **KEYSTONE KAPERS**, by Garry Kitchen. The release of **HAPPY TRAILS**, designed by Carol Shaw for use with the Intellivision system, was announced on April 12.

DOLPHIN is a special undersea chase game which uses sound as an essential element of its game play. As a bursting sun settles into a turquoise sea, a pink squid chases a graceful, playful dolphin through schools of seahorses. **DOLPHIN** is one of the first video games to employ "audio direction." The player must use his or her ears as well as eyes to master the play. The gamer must listen for the dolphin's variably-pitched sonar echo, which warns him or her of the approaching gaps in a vertical wall of sea horses, while trying to stay out of reach of the squid.

Periodically during the chase, a seagull flies overhead. The player must make the dolphin leap into the air and touch the gull. Then, the dolphin has four seconds in which to turn and try to catch the squid. The dolphin can also catch "waves" which travel in both directions. These underwater currents can boost or hinder the dolphin's speed.

DOLPHIN should now be available in retail outlets, for use with the Atari VCS and similar

systems. It retails for a suggested $31.95.

KEYSTONE KAPERS is a single-player madcap chase where a persistant policeman must follow a roguish robber through a 1920's department store. The player uses the joystick to guide Keystone Kelly (the policeman) as he pursues Harry Hooligan (the robber) through three floors and across the rooftop of a merchandise-filled department store. Kelly is
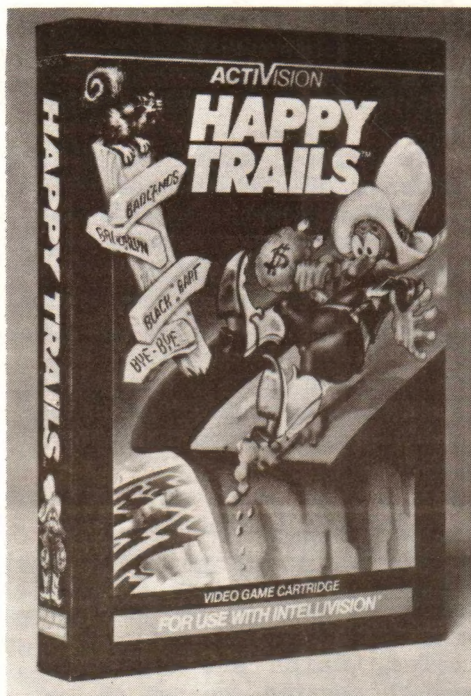
HAPPY TRAILS for Intellivision and two for the VCS are now available for play.

Tigervision Releases VCS MINER 2049-ER

MINER 2049ER was scheduled for release from Tigervision May ninth, and should already be arriving in retail stores, for use with the 2600 VCS. The game has already achieved top title status in Atari 400/800 and Apple formats.

The implementation of **MINER 2049ER** has made available three different playing screens, by use of an expanded ROM memory cartridge.

MINER 2049ER is the adventure of "Bounty Bob," mining an abandoned uranium mine in the year 2049. You control Bounty Bob in his travels throughout the mine and must "claim" all of the various mine stations. Cute but deadly mutant organisms prance casually throughout

the mine. Any contact with them is fatal. They must be avoided or hopped over. Various objects left behind by other miners are scattered throughout the mine. These objects can be captured by touching them, for extra points. Additionally, the mutant will change color into a happy creature that is now edible. The player must run Bounty Bob into them before they return to their deadly forms, to get rid of them and score more points. Whenever Bob walks along sections of framework in the mine, the sections immediately under his feet will turn solid. To advance to the next station, the player must "claim" all sections of the framework. Missing even one section will prevent Bounty Bob from advancing to the next station.

Screen One is referred to as "The Slides." Bounty Bob must collect all the chunks of uranium ore by use of the slides, ladders and by jumping over the open mine shafts. Mutants must be avoided or jumped.

Screen Two is "The Transporters. In this screen you can use the "Transporters" (middle screen) to reach different levels of the mine.

Screen Three is called "The Cannon." The player must make Bounty Bob load a cannon, with which to blast himself to any level in the station desired. Six aliens attack on this level, and munching them is impossible.

The popular MINER 2049ER is now available for play on your VCS system.

— MAY 1983 —

***A temporary restraining order was granted against Atari, Incorporated March 29, 1983, barring them from trying to force their wholesale distrbutors to stop selling competing brands of video games and software. Parker Brothers claimed they lost orders amounting to $15 million as a result of a change in Atari's wholesale distribution system, claiming that Atari had given their distributors a deadline of March 31 to enter an exclusive arrangement or they would no longer do business with them. Warner Communications President Emmanuel Gerard was quoted in a recent AP wire story as saying that Atari's attorneys were considering the possibilities of going to exclusive relationships "all the way."

***The profileration of home video games have definitely hurt arcade profits, says a recent Play Meter Magazine survey. According to the report, weekly receipts on coin-operated games have fallen 21 per cent this year. The only arcades reportedly doing well are those charging 15 cents per game. More of the same was predicted for 1983.

***Imagic has made the decision not to introduce the video software cartridge SKY PATROL and is withdrawing its listing from all future product publications. Originally, SKY PATROL, which was designed as an Atari VCS compatible game, was slated for an April release. The intention to produce SKY PATROL was announced at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show in January. However, as a result of continued product testing since that time, they have learned that the cartridge did not receive a high enough consumer appeal to warrant its release. The company feels that it was in the best interests of everyone concerned to withdraw the game from their roster of products.

***Spectravideo, Incorporated announced April 11th they filed their registration statement with the Securities and Exchange Commission, offering the sale, by the company, through D.H. Blair $ Co., Inc. (44 Wall Street, New York, NY 10005), managing underwriter, of approximately one million shares of Class A Common Stock, par value, $.01 per-share. Corporation President Harry Fox made the announcement.

***Warner Communication and Coleco Industries have settled their double multi-million-dollar lawsuits out of court. Atari had sued for $350 million, claiming Coleco's VCS adapter for their Colecovision console was a blatant copy of Atari's patented VCS hardware circuitry. Coleco counter-sued for $500, alleging anti-trust violations against Atari. Coleco decided to pay royalties to Atari for units they sell and Atari agreed to accept that. Both companies agreed the impending court battle could outlast the marketability of the units in question.

***Inn-Room Video Games is a new company now offering Colecovision consoles and cartridges to hotel and motel guests. The charge is $5-10 per night for the console and software costs another small additional rental fee. The company reports they placed over 800 units in March alone. Radisson Corporation, Rodeway, Days End, Best Western, Americana and some Hilton and Sheriton hotels have agreed to make the service available.

***Leisuretronics, "The International Congress and Exhibition for the Electronic Gaming Industry," is scheduled for February 21-24 in Monte Carlo, Monaco. Intended as a gathering of representatives of video game manufacturers, retailers and other branches, the congress will not be open to the public.

***Room for designers and their support teams will almost double at CBS Video games and CBS Software soon. A major expansion at their Greenwich, Connecticut facility is now being outfitted and will house both research and development when completed.

***Trouble is brewing and it appears that U.S. Games Corporation may be no more. Reportedly, a lack of sales and lax marketing efforts have brought down the Quaker Oats subsidiary that debuted at the June Consumer Electronics Show under the Vidtec banner. At this writing, the fate of the company was still in limbo, while Quaker decided whether to continue operations or get out of the business. If the company folds, their current library of games might be picked up and distributed by another firm.

***Reports are sketchy, but word has it that Data Age is going under, too, and has already filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The suspected culprit in this case was their recent miscalculation regarding the potential market for their **JOURNEY:ESCAPE** VCS game cartridge. Reported sales of the licensed game have fallen far short of expectations, returning too little of the money the company spent on massive magazine and television advertising. Sources say that efforts to hold things together are underway, especially considering Data Age's recent release of two well-received new titles, **BERMUDA TRIANGLE** and **FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER**.

***A new Sony Trinitron TV now features a front-mounted auxiliary VHF input jack, allowing video gamers to hook their systems directly to the set without disconnecting the antenna.

*** COMPUTER BRIEFS.... ***

***Texas Instruments has taken steps to maintain control of all software produced for their TI-994A home computer system, by using

Parker Brothers Releases Two Games for Kids

In keeping with their promise to acquire prominent licenses and serve all ages of video gamers, Parker Brothers has just released G.I. JOE COBRA STRIKE and STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE MUSICAL MATCH-UPS. The former is designed especially for young boys, ages 5-10 and the latter is aimed at young girls aged 4-8.

G.I. JOE COBRA STRIKE features a novel game play that can accommodate one, two or even three players simultaneously. The game begins with the G.I. Joe team under siege by its arch-enemy, Cobra, a giant robot snake that looms menacingly over the G.I. Joe base. Players can choose to either command Cobra's attack or defend the army camp by manning the dynamic weaponry in the G.I. Joe arsenal.

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE MUSICAL MATCH-UPS combines education and fun in a whimsical and easy-to-learn activity game, providing an excellent opportunity for developing color, tune, character and name recognition.

Players enter the magical world of Strawberryland, where Strawberry Shortcake and three of her friends — Lime Chiffon, Blueberry Muffin and Huckleberry Pie — have gathered to stage a talent show. It isn't all fun and games for these four playful friends, however. The Purple Pieman is determine to spoil the fun by scrambling Strawberry Shortcake and her friends. It's up to the player to unscramble and recreate each of them once again, by mixing and matching the appropriate heads, torsos and legs.

To signal that the player has correctly reassembled the Strawberryland characters, the playmates dance to a lighthearted melody as their names appear on the screen.

Both new children's video games should already be available at retail outlets everywhere.

## Rapid-Fire Options Now Available from Gammation

Many companies are now offering video gamers some mighty innovative accessories which enhance — and even improve — their game play. Gammation, in Fairborn, Ohio, has already been at it quite a while, and, as evidenced by their current product line, they certainly seem to know what they're doing.

One of their specialties is rapid-fire accessories for joysticks, for both video game systems and home computers. Their "Fire-Power FP-1" provides continuos rapid fire when the red button on the Atari joystick is depressed. It's a small electronic circuit that easily installs inside the controller itself. The circuit firing rate is approximately 15 shots per second. This rapid-fire action gives video gamers additional advantages in scoring and a new offensive and defensive tactic. The FP-1 increases scoring greatly on such games as DEFENDER, STAR WARS, STAR MASTER, MISSILE COMMAND, ASTEROIDS and many others and also offers some relief from thumb wear associated with long playing sessions. When a joystick with FP-1 is matched against one without, it can even the score between young and old.

The FP-1 must be installed in the joystick itself, but requires no soldering or batteries, and provides quick single-shot firing before it changes to rapid-fire mode. Available models include the FP-1 or FP-1-V (for the Atari VCS and joystick), the FP-8 (for Atari 400/800 computers and joysticks), and the FP-1-W and FP-8-W (for WICO VCS and Atari 400/800 joysticks). All of the above are available from the company for $11.95 each. Gammation also offers gamers their new FirePower 100 — an adjustable rapid-fire module that connects where the joystick usually does. The joystick then simply plugs into the FP-100. The unit features a rotating dial with which the player can select the number of shots per second, from a maximum of 30 down to single-shot fire. The unit uses no batteries and features a special LED firing monitor that displays firing pulses so the player knows which rate-setting has been selected — before the game begins. The FP-100 works on the Atari VCS, Colecovision, and most home computers, including the Atari 400/800 and VIC 20, and sells for $24.95, plus $1.50 postage and handling.

The above products can be ordered from Gammation by telephone, using Master Card or Visa, or by mail by writing to: Gammation, P.O. Box 1028, Fairborn, OH 45324. Phone: (513) 832-1322.

FIRE POWER 100
FAST
SLOW   SINGLE
Gammation
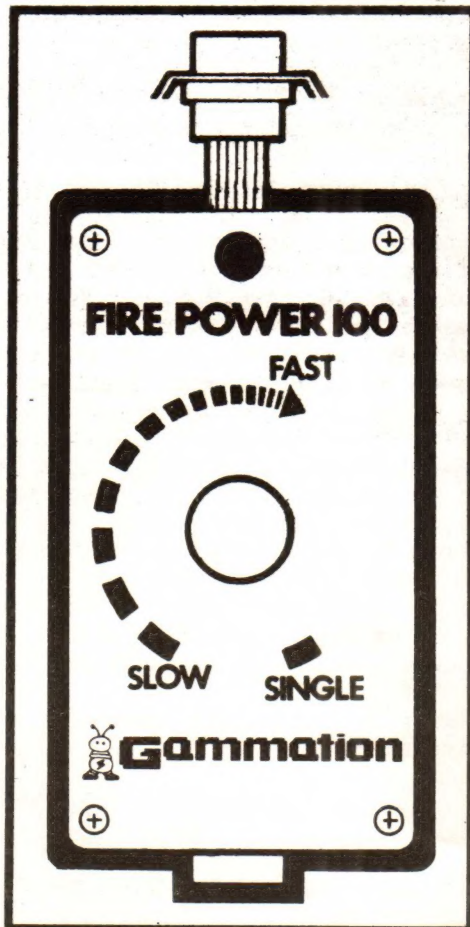
Activision Announces Two National Give-Aways

Activision, Incorporated announced April 6th the rollout of the first rub-and-win game card promotion in the history of the video game industry, with the nationwide $35,000 KEYSTONE KAPERS "KATCH THE KROOK" GIVEAWAY.

Inside every specially-marked box of KEYSTONE KAPERS, which will be introduced at retail this month, will be a rub-and-win game card. By rubbing the covered squares on the card, and "katching" three "krooks" in a row, a consumer can instantly win one of thousands of prizes.

The prizes, which resemble elements of the game play in KEYSTONE KAPERS, include two $5,000 series EE U.S. Savings Bonds, 250 AM/FM portable radios, 500 engine-powered model airplanes and 1,500 beach balls. The odds of winning any prize in the giveaway are 1 in 231, which is much higher than in many rub-and-win game card promotions.

If a card isn't an instant winner, all is not lost, because it will still offer a Mystery Rebate. The Mystery Rebate is good on the purchase of one of five hit Activision titles, which are concealed beneath covered squares at the bottom of each card.

Activision also announced, on April 12, the rollout of their $35,000 HAPPY TRAILS "Bounty Hunter Sweepstakes," a nationwide sales promotion for its new Intellivision-compatible video game cartridge, HAPPY TRAILS.

Following the western theme of HAPPY TRAILS, in which a bounty hunter chases after the desperado, Black Bart, and picks up bags of money, prizes for the sweepstakes include a $5,000 cash Grand Prize, three $1,000 cash rewards and twenty $100 cash rewards. In addition, 5,000 belt buckles will be given away.

Entry blanks, located on special "Bounty Hunter" easel cards, are only available at participating Activision dealers. In addition, co-op newspaper advertisements, which contain a Bounty Hunter puzzle piece, are available for dealers. Consumers cut out the puzzle-piece, take it to a participating Activision retailer, match it to the puzzle on the easel card, and instantly receive a secret "Bounty Hunter" bonus.

To enter the contest, participants simply mail in the completed entry form (to an address on the form) by June 30, 1983. A drawing will be held and sweepstakes winners will be notified in August.

Coinciding with the "Bounty Hunter Sweepstakes" is a special HAPPY TRAILS cross-rebate. Inside every specially-marked box of HAPPY TRAILS is a $5 rebate offer for STAMPEDE by Activision for Intellivision between May 1 and December 15, 1983.

KEYSTONE KAPERS is one of two games featured in the contests.

Game-of-the-Month Club Offers Variety, Discounts

If games are your game and variety is your spice of life, THE GAME OF THE MONTH CLUB just might be for you.

Founded and run by game designer Ken Rand, the club basically operates just like those for books and records. A recent advertisement offered new members the opportunity to buy as many as four games at the club's cost and receive DOTTO, an international strategy game listed in GAMES magazine's "Top 100," free. To qualify for the discounts, new members must only agree to purchase four more games — at prices guaranteed to run 10 - 50% below manufacturer's suggested retail — during the next two years.

One interesting aspect of the club is its wide assortment of games, ranging from board and card games to the latest in video games, all at club discounts. Currently, about 75% of the club's regular offerings are video games, but, according to Mr Rand, more board and card games will be added as time passes, while a strong commitment to video gaming will be upheld.

A recent newsletter also announced the club's intentions to add computers and computer games to the line-up, making Game-of-the-Month Club's variety one that is truly all-encompassing. The monthly newsletter also features articles, contests and a complete list of alternate selections. The club used to ship the selection of the month automatically, but has just eliminated that practice. Now there are no monthly cards to worry about mailing in.

Write for more details, to: GAME-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB, P.O. Box 28484, San Jose, CA 95159.

Questar Offers Rapid-Fire Accessory

Questar has introduced the "BLASTER," a plug-in, adjustable speed, automatic firing module for Atari VCS, 400, 800, Coleco Vision, Sears Tele-Games and the Commodore VIC-20.

The "BLASTER" plugs in between the game console and the joystick. It adds extra fire-power to games like **DEFENDER**, **ZAXXON**, **ASTRO BLITZ**, and other shoot-em-ups. It converts single shot firing into high speed machine gun action, up to 20 shots per second.

The adjustable speed control allows the player to dial in the firing rate to match the game software and the player's preference. Since it can be adjusted to a single shot mode, there is no need to plug and unplug the module over and over.

The circuitry is totally passive to protect the game console and extend the applications to include the Atari 400,
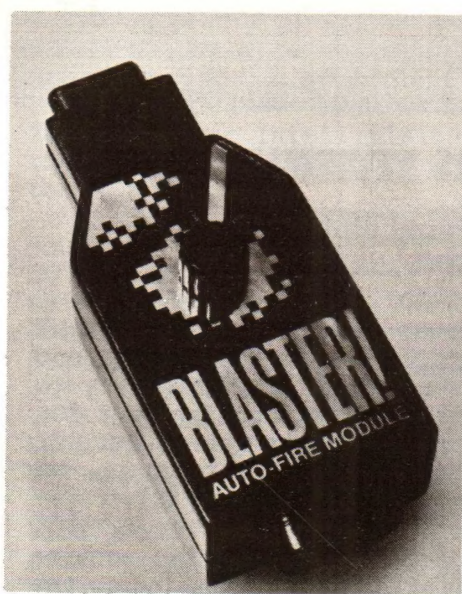
800, and Coleco Vision. It retails for $12.95 and carries a one-year warranty. For more information, contact QUESTAR, 670 N. W. Pennsylvania Avenue, Chehalia, Washington 98532.

Coleco's VCS Module

by Alan R. Bechtold

Much has happened since we first reported on Coleco's new VCS module. The new expansion unit added literally hundreds of games to a Colecovision owner's potential library. Atari sued Coleco, and Coleco sued back. The suit has since been dropped, in favor of a royalty arrangement. And a large number of disappointed readers have found that the VCS emulator doesn't accept all VCS-compatible games, as was originally promised.

My own research into the matter has identified a number of manufacturers and specific cartridges that don't play in my own module. Tigervision's games don't seem to work at all. Neither do the first five releases from Data Age, although their last three releases, **JOURNEY ESCAPE**, **BERMUDA TRIANGLE** and **FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER** did. Some releases from U.S. Games didn't seem to work, **PICNIC** being the most recent example.

Then there was the BIGGIE: The new Starpath Supercharger wouldn't fit the Coleco VCS slot. It turned out the slot itself was a bit deeper than on Atari's original design, and the Supercharger tapered outward on the sides so that it got too thick to go into the emulator's slot far enough to connect with the unit's internal circuitry.

Starpath, at first, suggested that owners remove the cover from the Coleco adapter.

Thanks to our readers, the idea came up to shave off about 1/8th of an inch from the sides of the Supercharger itself. This was all that had to be removed, to allow it to slide into the cartridge slot and connect perfectly. Soon, Starpath started telling owners of their earlier Supercharger to shave it down a bit — and announced that their new Superchargers had been re-designed to fit the slot right from the box.

This solved a lot of problems, but there is still the trouble with some games not working. My only advice here is to deal only with reputable firms that will accept returns if they don't work in your unit — then pass the news of which game didn't work on to us. Meanwhile, Mike and I will make every effort to report all new games we find that are incompatible in our reviews.

It's interesting how such problems have come about. Atari's lawsuit claimed that Coleco virtually reproduced their own patented circuitry when they produced their VCS module and Coleco was obviously trying not to, or all the same games would work in either machine. And the potential for trouble is getting more widespread. Coleco has now announced they will soon produce the Gemeni game system, a low-cost free-standing VCS-compatible unit.
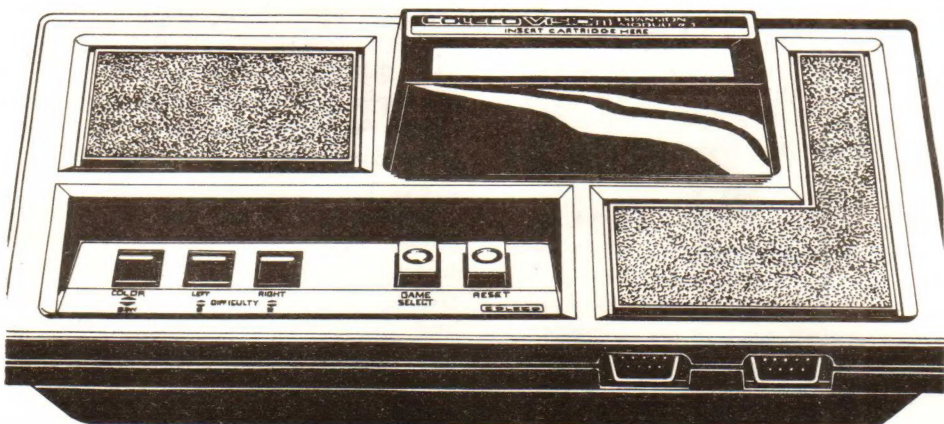
New Software Carts for Piggyback

Several titles are being introduced by Entex Industries for use with their 2000 Piggyback Color Computer (which will convert most major video game systems currently on the market into computers). These new products offer a wide variety of software for the home computer market — education, personal finance and personal development.

Slated for April shipment, with an approximate retail price of $35.99 are **COMPUTER TYPING**, **HOME FINANCE**, **BASIC PROGRAMMING** and **BEGINNING MATH**. "One of the nice features of the software cartridges is that any of them will run on the Piggyback computer without additional memory added to the system. Some software on other systems require the user to purchase an extra memory pack for their computer. These memory packs can cost as much as $100.00. We think that's unfair to the consumer," says Dimitri Criona, Entex's product manager for electronics. "We have designed all our software to run with our basic system so there's no hidden costs."

ering addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

BEGINNING ALGEBRA, **SPEED READING**, **SPELLING 1**, **WORD GAMES**, **NUMBER GAMES** and **SPORTS STATISTICS** will be available in June. All cartridges feature easy plug-in cartridge loading and simple step-by-step instructions.

COMPUTER TYPING is an interactive software cartridge to assist through three stages of computer typing literacy featuring dexterity exercises and self-correcting keyboard exercise games for speed and accuracy.

The **HOME FINANCE** program will assist the user in making personal budget decisions. Features include goal-oriented savings tables, repayment schedules and loan amortization schedules.

BASIC PROGRAMMING is a simple, step-by-step guide that will teach BASIC programming techniques using a new split-screen approach to make programming as easy as typing.

Activision Stages Seaquest Competition

When Activision staged "The Battle of Silicon Valley" on March 19, 1983, at Vallco Fashion Plaza in San Jose, California, 75 contestants submerged into the ocean depths to test the mettel of David Crane's newest brainchild for the Atari VCS, **SEAQUEST**.

The contest highlighted the "Salute to Silicon Valley" electronics show, with all proceeds going to the Mission Counties Chapter of the San Jose Muscular Dystrophy Association. District Director, Barney D. Clamage, joined in the fun with a group of volunteers who helped organize the event.

Each battler donated 50 cents for two chances to win the prizes provided by Activision, and gift certificates from the shopping center. The ten finalists each received a **RIVER RAID** T-shirt, while the top three also added a **SEAQUEST** cartridge to their video game libraries. Mike Pulido, third place winner of a $10 gift certificate, scored 23,250

points.

Then, in a final five-minute timed playoff, Joseph Amor totaled 61,190 points to win second prize of $25. Bill Ogle collected $50 and a Zircon Video Command joystick for a whopping 65,210-point score.

Bill, a 15-year-old who has been playing video games for about two years, narrowly edged out his Dad, who proudly took sixth place in the final standings. With a new **SEAQUEST** cartridge at home, the contest between father and son is sure to continue.

David Crane, one of the founders of Activision, was on hand to sign autographs and present the awards. Since he started his work in 1977, he has become deeply committed to computer design and graphics. This combination has given us **GRAND PRIX**, **DRAGSTER**, **FISHING DERBY**, **LASER BLAST**, **FREEWAY**, the phenomenal **PITFALL** and, now, **SEAQUEST**. There will undoubtedly be more blockbuster games coming from this talented young designer.

Activision designer and co-founder David Crane (left) presented First Prize winner Bill Ogle (right) with his prizes at "The Battle of Silicon Valley."

binaryvisions

HOME VIDEO GAMES REVIEWED

by Alan R. Bechtold and Mike Wilson

TRON: DEADLY DISCS

From Mattel's M-Network Line, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade and other similar systems.

This is an action arcade game that is very similar to the **TRON: DEADLY DISCS** cartridge for Intellivision, for one player at a time using the joystick controller. The player is Tron, inside the Master Computer and battling for his life. The object of the game is to eliminate as many disc-throwing computer warriors as possible by throwing Flynn's disc at them and dodging their discs as they come toward Flynn.

The game begins with Tron standing in the center of an empty arena, surrounded by four walls. Almost instantly, three doors open and one computer-controlled warrior enters the arena from each of them.

The warriors start running as soon as they enter, positioning themselves for good shots at Tron and firing their discs when ready. The player must move Tron with the joystick controller, pushing it in the desired direction to run. If Tron is hit five times, he is "de-rezzed," (dead).

Tron must also fight back by knocking the warriors out with his own discs. Discs are thrown by pressing the red Fire button. Tron's discs travel in any of the eight possible directions the joystick can be pushed. Warriors hit by one of Tron's discs are instantly "de-rezzed," but a new one will take the place of a fallen warrior after only a ten-second delay.

All discs bounce off the opposite wall and return to the thrower automatically. They are only dangerous when thrown, not when they are returning. Dangerous discs look like they are viewed edge-on and returning discs look like a square. When the player presses the red Fire button after throwing a disc, the disc will immediately return to Tron.

There can only be a maximum of three warriors on the screen at a time. If Tron can eliminate all three before their first replacements have arrived, the game will progress to a higher scoring level before the next three warriors enter the arena, and Tron will recover from one hit.

When one of Tron's discs hits a door through which the warriors have entered, that door will be locked open, indicated by a color change. If Tron can lock open two doors directly opposite from one another, he can instantly teleport from one door to the other by merely stepping into it. The entrance from which he was teleported is then closed, but will open again if a new warrior enters through it.

The current scoring level is indicated by the color of the opponents Tron must face. Green warriors are worth 10 points each, dark green are worth 20, blue are worth 40 points, white are worth 75, yellow warriors are worth 150 points each, black warriors are worth 300, red are worth 500 and gold warriors are worth 500 points. The higher scoring levels also feature warriors that move faster, pursue Tron more aggressively and throw more accurate discs more often.

The Left difficulty switch offers players a faster, more challenging game when it is in the "A" position. When it's in the "B" position, the game starts out slower and builds gradually to a fever pitch.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I liked **TRON: DEADLY DISCS** for Intellivision and this one is amazingly true to the original version, but for the VCS. The graphics weren't sacrificed in this game, as they are in so many VCS translations, because they weren't overly complex in the earlier release. What is missing is the Recognizer, which comes on-screen and repairs the doors Tron has locked open in the Intellivision game. This was a bit disappointing, but only until I played this game a little while. To be honest, I didn't miss the recognizer, once I got going.

VCS DEADLY DISCS is a fast-moving action game that quickly builds to a blinding speed as you get better at playing it. I guarantee you won't even see the higher-scoring warriors for a long while! It's extremely hard to hold your own against these formidable opponents long enough to reach the really tough ones. Maybe, after a few months of heavy play...

Seriously, this game moves faster and is a bit easier to control than the Intellivision game it was patterned after. I recommend it.

MIKE: Unlike Alan, I didn't really care for Intellivision **DEADLY DISCS** all that much. I played it and enjoyed it, but could never feel strongly that it was a sure-fire winner or a "must-have" for everyone.

But this one's different. **VCS TRON: DEADLY DISCS** is the first of the M-Network Tron games, just as it was for Intellivision, but this one seems to be quite a bit better than its predecessor. I didn't think the graphics were as good, but never expected them to be. The movement of the on-screen characters is just as good, however, and I can only agree that the overall play is even better.

In fact, I liked the control better, too. I also missed the Recognizer, but Mattel even managed to include the ability to make the discs return faster when you press the red Fire button a second time! Overall, I thought the game play held at a satisfactory level throughout in this version, though I still think the concept as a whole leaves a lot to be desired. This game deserves a close look if you think you would be at all interested in it. Mattel is to be congratulated on a superb translation from one system to the other, despite how I feel about the concept.

RATINGS:

Concept: New
Graphics/Sound: Fair - Good
Difficulty: Student - Master
Interest: Six Months

AIR RAIDERS
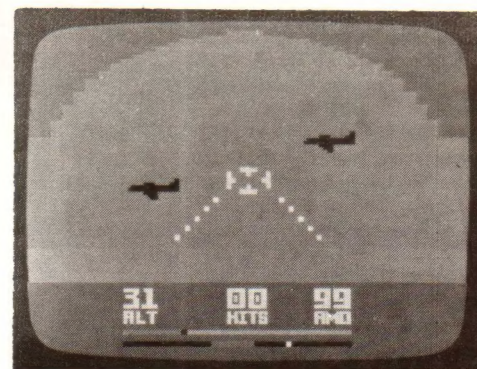
From Mattel's M-Network Line, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade and other similar systems.

AIR RAIDERS is an arcade dogfight simulation for one player at a time, using the Atari joystick controller. Players must pilot a lone plane through enemy territory, dodging missile fire from below and blasting as many enemy aircraft out of the sky as possible, without running out of fuel or ammo.

The opening display shows a runway stretching out before the player's viewport. Three numbers, running along the bottom of the screen, show the altitude, number of hits and ammo supply remaining.

As soon as the red button is pressed, the gamer's plane will start to accelerate down the runway, gaining speed. After about four seconds, the player must pull back on the joystick to lift off -- or crash at the end of the airstrip.

The player's viewpoint is through the cockpit. The horizon tilts, disappears or fills the screen when the plane is moved in the corresponding direction. Pulling back on the joystick makes the plane climb, pushing forward makes it dive. Pushing the joystick left and right makes the plane swing left or right.

Once airborn, the player must constantly watch for flak from enemy missile launchers on the ground below. If hit by flak, the plane will take a dive for a number of feet before it can be pulled up again. If flying too low, one hit from flak could crash the plane. Flak appears as black explosions in the viewport. A guage running across the bottom of the screen shows the plane's current position. A portion of the guage is red. When the player's plane is indicated as being in this section, it will also experience the most enemy flak.

Gamers must also watch for enemy planes, which swing into view, usually in groups of three, then split up as soon as one or more are hit. To blast the enemy out of the sky, the player must steer his or her

plane until the target is centered in the cross hairs in the center of the screen, then press the red controller button. Bullets fire continuously as long as the button is held down, but the ammo supply is limited. One point is scored for every enemy plane hit.

Fuel must also be conserved during the air battle. A guage, just below the altitude, hits and ammo display, indicates how much is remaining. Fuel is consumed as soon as the plane is airborne. The plane consumes about four times as much fuel when climbing as it does when diving, and about twice as much as when it is flying level. If the plane runs out of fuel when it is airborne, it will crash.

When the fuel supply is very low, the player can land the plane for refueling, as long as he or she has scored at least ten hits while up. The gamer must wait until the plane is realy low on fuel, then take it down to 00 altitude. The runway will appear soon and the player can then land the plane by pushing forward on the joystick until the horizon fills the screen, then releasing it. Upon landing, a full tank of fuel will be taken on, and one extra shot will be added to the ammo supply for each enemy shot down during the last mission.

The game ends when a player crashes or runs completely out of ammo and can't take off again. According to the instructions brochure, players who score zero to ten points the first game are ranked as Student Pilots. A score of 90 points plus during the entire game would earn a gamer a rating of Triple Ace.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: AIR RAIDERS is a very simple game, utilizing a basic concept. However, it's not really that easy to master. Mattel has taken a simple dogfight scenario and added the dimension of tying the ammo supply to the number of enemy planes shot down. Thus, if you aren't able to shoot down at least 20 planes on your first time up, it's nearly impossible to make it to the third take-off. This is one thing I didn't like about the game because it usually ended much sooner than I wanted it to. Maybe there could have been a better formula for success applied here that would not be so discouraging to some gamers.

Personally, in spite of my complaints, I found out that the ammo restriction also added challenge to the overall play. Others, however, may not find this to be the case. AIR RAIDERS is not one of those action-packed games that we are all coming to expect from a video game cartridge, but it really does offer a unique sort of laid-back action that can get to you if you take it too easy while playing. One mistake after the second take-off could mean you get to press the Reset button and try again. Take a good look at this one. It's another worthwhile VCS effort from Mattel.

ALAN: I can't agree wholly with Mike on this game. I've played it a lot and it gets a bit tiresome after a while, though I can agree that AIR RAIDERS is something pretty unique for the VCS. I'm just glad Mattel renamed it, so it wouldn't be confused with their fabulous B-17 BOMBER for Intellivision, though the similarities are there.

In this case, however, all you have is the single viewpoint, a take-off that is tricky for about the first three times you try it, enemy planes that don't shoot back and a landing sequence that is very hard to get control of. I know there are limits to the VCS memory that the Intellivision console never had to think about, but I suppose I found myself comparing the two, nonetheless.

If you like target games, this one is different enough that you probably should try it out in the stores and decide for yourself. I didn't care all that much for it.

RATINGS:

Concept: New
Graphics/Sound: Fair - Good
Difficulty: Student - Graduate
Interest:
One Week - Nine Months

AMIDAR
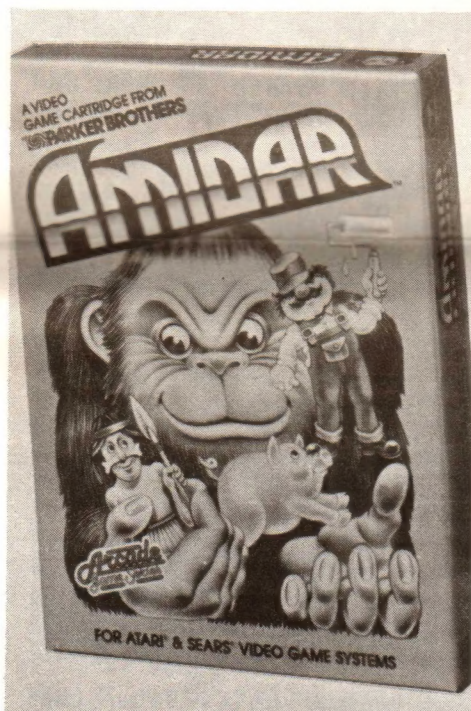
From Parker Brothers, under authorization by Konami Industry Co., Ltd., for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade and similar systems.

AMIDAR is an arcade maze/action adaptation, for one player at a time using the joystick controllers. The object of the game is to run an on-screen character around a maze of lines, "painting" all of the boxes formed between the lines solid, while avoiding contact with deadly warriors and pigs who also roam the maze lines. In the first round, the player's on-screen character is a gorilla. The maze is a large square made up of boxes of varying sizes and dimensions. The gorilla starts out on one of the lines between the boxes, and is moved around between them when the player pushes the joystick in the desired direction.

When the player makes his or her gorilla travel along one entire side of a box, that line changes color. When all four sides of a box are painted, the entire box will then change color. The gamer must try to paint all of the boxes on the screen, to move on to progressively more difficult mazes.

In the first level of play, the gorilla is pursued by a number of warriors that will eliminate him if they can touch him. The player can press the fire button, if things get too tight, and the warriors will turn into harmless shadows — but only for a few seconds. This can only be done four times for every gorilla the player uses. When all four corner boxes are colored in, the warriors turn into helpless chickens — but only for a few moments. The chickens will try to avoid the player's gorilla, The gorilla can eliminate the chickens and add to the player's score when he touches them, but they only stay helpless chickens for a short time before turning back into warriors on the hunt.

Once all of the boxes in the first maze have been colored in, the action moves on to the second screen. Here, the player's on-screen character is a paint roller, chased by pigs. The action, however, is the same. Hitting the fire button will transform the pigs into shadows for a brief moment and coloring in the four corner sections will turn them into chickens. After this maze has been colored in, the action moves back to the screen with the gorilla and warriors, and so forth, at progressively higher levels of play.

In the first two rounds, both screens feature five warriors or pigs, In rounds three through six, there are six warriors or pigs pursuing the player's on-screen character. The pigs and warriors move faster in each round.

Each player starts the game with three lives. Lives remaining are carried over to the next round. An extra gorilla or paint roller is awarded for each maze completed. The game ends when no lives are left.

Points are scored for every line painted and every box completed. Bonus points are awarded for chickens the player eliminates.

When the Difficulty switch is in position "A," the game starts at level one, with five warriors running on the maze, traveling at the slowest speed, When the Difficulty lever is in position "B," the game starts at level three, with six warriors moving much faster.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: I was one of those rare individuals who really enjoyed playing this game in the arcades. I'm not really pleased with this version, however. I realize the VCS memory capabilities don't nearly compare with that of arcade machines, but I still think they could have brought this one a lot closer than they did. The overall play is so slow it led to a sense of frustration I simply can't describe.

I was disappointed to find that the paint brush level was no different than the gorilla maze. I didn't expect to see the individual points in each square, as you could in the arcade game, but I did hope you had to fill in the spaces in a continuous motion. Unfortunately, this was not the case. In the final analysis, AMIDAR should be left on the shelf, especially if you like to take your quarters to the nearest arcade and play the real thing.

ALAN: Now for a view from someone who isn't a die-hard arcader. I liked Parker Brothers' AMIDAR. No -- it's not completely true to the original. No — the graphics aren't stupendous by today's standards. No — there isn't even a catchy arcade tune. Why did I like it, you might ask? I'm a maze freak, and this game presents a unique maze challenge that plays fairly well. The concept is different, enough, too, especially if you aren't a regular arcade-goer, to warrant a maze-freak's attention. Period.

The major drawbacks to this game only appear if you played it in the arcade or if you play the home game for a long while. In the first place, the cute graphics were the real attraction in the arcade version. They didn't come through for the VCS on that score. Also, the play of the Parker Brothers version is not complicated enough to warrant a serious maze-gamer's attention for more than a month or so. Still, it's a good one for parties and younger children will probably be able to keep it going for quite a while. I give it an unqualified "maybe." There are a lot worse games you could spend your money on.

RATINGS:

Concept: Original
Graphics/Sound: Poor - Fair
Difficulty: Student
Interest: One Week - One Month

REACTOR

From Parker Brothers, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade and other similar systems.

REACTOR is a Parker Brothers arcade translation for the VCS, for one or two players using the Atari joystick controllers. The players are trapped in a nuclear reactor that is nearing meltdown. The object of the game is to destroy as many nuclear particles as possible, before they smash the player's ship into the kill wall and eliminate it, while trying to knock down all the control rods, to stop the emminent melt-down.

The game begins with the player's ship inside the reactor. The reactor's walls surround the ship. In the center is the core, about to start expanding or already doing so. In two corners of the screen are additional reactor rooms, with only one small entrance into each. The reactor's outermost walls are referred to as the "kill walls." Both the enemy particles and the player's ship are destroyed whenever they touch them. The ship is moved when the player pushes the joystick in any of the eight possible directions.

Almost immediately, the enemy particles enter the reac-

(CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE)

tor. They are attracted to the player's ship and, although very small, can be extremely powerful. They attack the ship, one at a time or in groups, by trying to bump the player's vessel into the kill walls and eliminate it. At higher skill levels, the particles are heavier and travel at faster speeds, knocking the player's ship farther when they hit it.

The player must instead try to knock all of the particles into the kill walls with his or her ship. They can also be slammed into the reactor's rods, to shrink the expanding core. Heavier, faster-moving particles aren't moved as easily.

Players also start the game with three decoys. These are left anywhere within the reactor's walls when the red controller button is pressed. They attract the enemy particles toward them and away from the player's ship, so they can be very useful, especially if they are left near the control rods, kill walls or bonus chambers. Decoys can't be moved or destroyed, but only stay on-screen for ten seconds after they are released.

There are two sets of control rods, extending out from either side of the reactor's walls. These control the intensity of the reaction in the core. The player must knock the rods out by slamming particles against them, to avert a total melt-down. If one entire set of rods is knocked out, the core will shrink one size. If both sets are eliminated, the player will earn an extra decoy for the effort.

The longer the game progresses, the more the reactor core grows, leaving less and less space for the player to avoid particles and destroy them. If at least one complete set of rods is not destroyed, the core will simply keep growing, until there is no more space in which to play.

One bonus chamber is located on each side of the screen. Both chambers alternate positions, first at the top of the screen, then at the bottom. If a particle enters one of these chambers, the player will earn 15 bonus points every time it bounces off the chamber walls, until it finally escapes or disappears. The chambers both switch positions, from the top to the bottom of the screen, whenever a particle or the player's ship has entered it and then leaves.

The game progresses through four levels, with eight rounds in each level. There are eight progressively more difficult levels of play on the cartridge, four for one player and four for two. More particles and rods, and a faster-growing core, are featured in each higher level of play. One play level even features a reactor with invisible walls. In this game, the player can only see the rods and particles. Players may also choose to start the game at any level.

Gamers each start out with three ships and three decoys. Particles appear as Leptons or Neutrinos, each worth 200 points, and Positrons or Photons, worth 50 points each. Unused decoys earn a 500 point

bonus at the end of each round. Extra ships are added to the player's reserve for every 10,000 points earned. Two players alternate turns. The game is over when a player has lost his or her last ship. In the two-player mode, each gamer gets to keep playing until all of his or her ships have been destroyed.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I really went around and around trying to decide whether or not I liked this game. At first, I was turned off by the essentially unadorned graphics. Then I got intrigued with the game play itself, because the action is simple, but the consequences of every action get complex very quickly. Finally, I got totally frustrated with my inability to stay in the game more than a little while, and with the lack of anything of real value happening as a reward for all of my effort.

I know the arcade game had little to offer in the way of graphics, either, and this game plays about as well on the VCS. But the whole thing's been done before already, and this version wasn't any better than the previous ones. I wonder if it was worth the effort. I don't think it'll prove to be worth your money.

MIKE: The graphics on this game do leave a little to be desired. Then again, I've never been inside of a working reactor (I understand, however, that Alan does glow late at night). The pace is very fast, however, and some quick strategic planning is required in order to reach the higher levels. With the core constantly growing, speed is most definitely a necessity. This is the most redeeming aspect of the game.

My first complaint doesn't really count, because a number of really fine cartridges have overcome the obstacle of graphics that were less than spectacular. The major problem I had with this one is the speed and difficulty of the game as a whole. **REACTOR** is a very difficult game to master. By the time I got to the point where I could do reasonably well, I was beginning to wonder whether it was worth it. I don't think it is, given the other better games that are currently on the market.

If you're really interested in video games that require fantastic speed while doing the same things over and over and over, **REACTOR** might be for you. It's not that great for the average player.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Fair
Difficulty: Graduate
Interest: Three Months

JEDI ARENA

From Parker Brothers, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade and other similar systems.

This is an arcade action game for one or two players, using the paddle controllers.

Two on-screen characters stand on either side of a whirling deadly Seeker, the floating object Jedi Knights use for training. The object of the game is to ward off the powerful energy bolts coming from the Seeker with the player's light saber, while sending as many of the bolts at the other player as possible, trying to knock out his or her protective shield and eliminate the opposition.

The display is of the Jedi Arena, looking straight down from overhead. One player's character is at the top of the screen and the other is at the bottom. Each on-screen hero holds a light saber out in front of him. A protective force field is wrapped around in front of each on-screen character.

As the game begins, the seeker immediately begins whirling, floating, and humming its way around the arena. The computerized metallic globe moves, apparently of its own free will and totally at random. It is capable of reaching out very quickly with extremely powerful energy bolts that knock out one section of a player's force field every time they touch it. Once there is a large enough hole in either player's shield, the next energy bolt that snakes its way through the gap will eliminate that player's on-screen Jedi Knight.

Players rotate the knob on the paddle controller to swing the light saber, which can ward off the Seeker's bolts of energy. The fire button on each paddle controller is used to
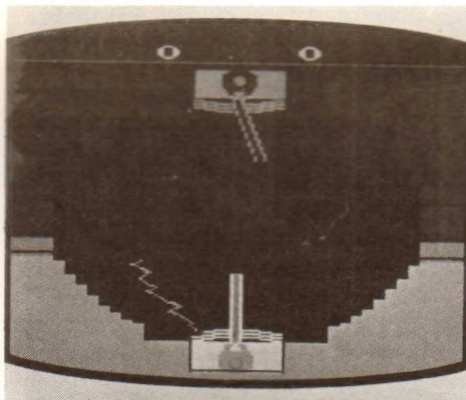
send energy bolts from the Seeker toward the opponent's on-screen character, in the same direction as his light saber was pointing before the button was pressed. Aiming offensive fire is made even trickier by the fact that the Seeker is constantly in motion, and might have drastically changed positions by the time the player has his or her bolt aimed. The opponent, whether it's the computer or another player, is also firing back at the player, demanding defensive maneuvers all the time he or she is trying to aim and fire off her an offensive energy bolt.

Piece by piece, one small section of a single layer of each player's force field is whittled away whenever contact is made, until a hole is made all the way through. Then, as soon as the shield is penetrated by a single bolt, that player has won one match. When a player has been eliminated three times, he or she has lost the game. Players switch sides with every elimination.

As the game is played, the Seeker continues building en-

ergy within itself. Finally, after every few minutes of play, the Seeker builds up so much internal energy it goes crazy and starts zapping around the center of the arena with incredible speed, shooting off countless bolts of energy in rapid succession and in all directions, until the excess energy has been dissipated and it calms itself back into normal action. During this time, players cannot make the Seeker fire a blast, but they couldn't if they wanted to. So many blasts are coming so fast it's all a gamer can do to ward them off until the Jedi training device has calmed again and normal play can resume. Players whose shields are penetrated during this phase are still eliminated, in the other player's favor.

There are eight game options available on the **JEDI ARENA** game cartridge. Games one through six are for one and two players, respectively, with a Seeker that moves faster the higher the game number played. Games seven and eight feature a Seeker that is invisible, for one and two players, respectively. In this game, the only way to tell where the Seeker is is to see where the energy bolts are coming from when it fires.

In the single-player mode, the computer takes over control of the opposite Jedi. When the left or right Difficulty switch is in the "A" position, that player's Jedi is protected by a force field that is three lines deep. The "B" position offers a field that is four layers deep. Shields may be set differently for each of the two gamers, to make up for differences in the player's abilities.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: The display on Parker's **JEDI ARENA** was unimpressive enough that, at first, I didn't have high hopes for a good game. Looks can be deceiving. This is, in fact, an excellent fast-action video game, whether played with another or alone against the computer. I liked it better than the first Star Wars game and I think you will, too.

Actually, the play is very simple, and can be learned in a few moments by even the youngest of gamers. The various levels available for play will accommodate most any acquired skill, too. I think the game might — and I repeat might — get a little tiring when playing it alone for long periods of time, but I doubt that anyone could tire of taking on new human challengers as an opponent. Show someone this one and you won't have any trouble finding players to take on, either. My five-year-old son grasped the game concept immediately and can now give me a good run for my money.

The best part of the whole game is the sound effects. You can actually hear that Seeker humming and whirling, and the light sabers as they slash back and forth defensively. It's enough to put you right there, sweating with every bolt the thing lets loose.

Buy **JEDI ARENA** — I mean it.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

It's an original well worth owning.

MIKE: As much as I hated Parker's first Star Wars video game, this one falls on the exact opposite end of the spectrum for me, too. **JEDI ARENA** is one of the best two-player games I've seen in a long time. I really enjoyed it. As Alan said, it's not a complicated game, but it does require that you know when to play offense and when to defend your shield. The reflexes of a genuine Jedi Knight are also required, if you are ever going to beat your opponent.

I especially liked the idea of forcing you to change sides with every match, so no one has the advantage of getting the top or bottom of the screen all the time. I thought the best-of-three game set-up was a good idea, too. That's more than the Jedi would give you in true armed combat, I suspect.

The game falls down in quality when in the single-player mode, however. I didn't like the fact that, as long as you are shooting, the computer will only play defense and will not attack. This might not be important in some games, but in this one it gives you all the advantage in the world with victory always too much within easy grasp.

Still, this is a really good game that I must recommend highly.

RATINGS:

Concept: Original
Graphics/Sound: Fair – Good
Difficulty: Beginner – Student
Interest: Six Months – One Year

OINK!

Designed by Mike Lorenzen for Activision, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade and other similar systems.

Activision's **OINK!** is an action game for younger children, played by one or two gamers at a time, either co-operatively or competitively, using the joystick controllers. The object of the game is to stop the wolf from blowing the piggy's home in by rebuilding damaged sections of the house faster than they can be knocked down.

As the game begins, the screen displays the player's first pig standing in his house. Bigelow B. Wolf is standing below the house. Three rows of bricks separate the wolf and the pig. A row of replacement bricks is located just over the piggy's head.

Bigelow immediately starts rushing back and forth across

the bottom of the screen, blowing with his powerful breath up at the bricks that separate him and the delectable piggy. Each time his breath hits the bricks, one brick is removed. There are many bricks, but they are eliminated quickly.

The player moves his or her piggy around the house by pushing the joystick controller in the desired direction. The piggy has to get to the top row of bricks and pick up one at a time, when the player pushes on the red Fire button, then replace the bricks that have been blown away from the bottom row by pressing the red Fire button again. This makes the pig throw the brick down at the bottom row. A new row of replacement bricks will appear whenever one row is depleted, but the wolf gets tougher to keep up with.

Bigelow B. Wolf is trying desperately to blow a hole in the row of bricks above his head big enough to suck the piggy through. He can suck through any size hole, and will pull the pig down to the bottom row even if the hole isn't big enough to pull him on through, thus keeping him from getting replacement bricks for a brief while. If he can pull the pig through a hole in the bricks, however, that piggy is lost.

Gamers start out with three pigs each. Points are added to the total score for every brick the player replaces. One player can take on the wolf, or two can try their luck, taking turns whenever one loses a piggy. A third option on the cartridge allows one player to control the pigs and another to control the wolf. When a player's last pig is lost, the game is over.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: The graphics on this game are fantastic. The pigs and wolf are colorfully depicted in exacting detail, and their movements are pretty true-to-life. The game itself is tough, too. Maybe too tough for the age-group this was designed for. That's my one reservation about recommending this one.

What makes **OINK!** worth looking at is the unique game-play in the two-player mode. Here, one player can be the pig and the other one the wolf. This is the one mode where kids just might have a ball. Otherwise, the computer-controlled wolf is awfully awesome — and seemed too discouraging to the five-to-eight-year-olds I had try it out. One seven-year-old took one look at the game and said, "That's not very exciting." Take that for what it's worth.

In short, **OINK!** is probably of limited appeal age-wise, though letting your kid be the wolf while you play the pig could provide some interesting family activity for a while. Overall, I'm afraid the game won't hold up for long. I have to say no on this one for most gamers. Consider it only if you are trying to please the very limited age group it might appeal to.

MIKE: As usual, the people at Activision are giving us some very good graphics with this new game, but I think they've really fallen short with the play action on **OINK!** For the most part, the game appears to

lack any interesting play action at all.

I wasn't particularly impressed with this one when I first saw it at CES. When my copy of it arrived and I started playing it, I found myself reaching for the reset button every time I lost, which was quite frequently. A lot more often than I ever imagined I would, from my initial impression. I never said it was easy to play. The result, for a while, was the false impression that this game had something more to it than I had suspected. The truth was the game became mildly addictive for the first few hours, then, for almost no reason at all, the feeling for it left me, before I had really had time to master it. At this time, I realized that **OINK!**'s main problem is a lack of any long-term potential. If I were you, I would avoid this one for some of Activision's newer games that are more exciting.

RATINGS:

Concept: Original
Graphics/Sound:
Good – Excellent
Difficulty: Student – Graduate
Interest: One – Two Weeks

KEYSTONE KAPERS

From Activision, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade and other similar systems.

This is a climbing, ducking jumping arcade game, for one player at a time, using the Atari joystick controller. The player is Keystone Kelly the cop, chasing a crook who has broken into a large 1920's department store. The cop must recover stolen items as he chases the criminal, while avoiding collisions with shopping carts, basketballs, radios and biplanes, before time runs out.

The game begins with Kelly on the first floor and the crook above him, trying to make a break for the roof, where he can escape. The player must run his or her cop through the store and try to apprehend the thief before he gets away. Keystone runs along each floor when the joystick is pushed to the right or left. He jumps when the red Fire button is pressed and ducks when the joystick is pulled toward the player.

The department store is three stories high. Each floor is much wider than the TV screen, so the background scrolls along with Kelly as he runs. An elevator runs up and down all the floors in the center of the building. "Up" escalators are located at each end of the store.

To hop on an elevator, the player must make Kelly wait by it until it reaches his floor, then make him step into it by pushing up on the joystick. He'll then ride it up and down until the player pulls down on the joystick to make him step off and resume his chase. Kelly can go up an escalator just by touching it, but that's the only direction they move. The clincher is the fact that the roof can only be reached by
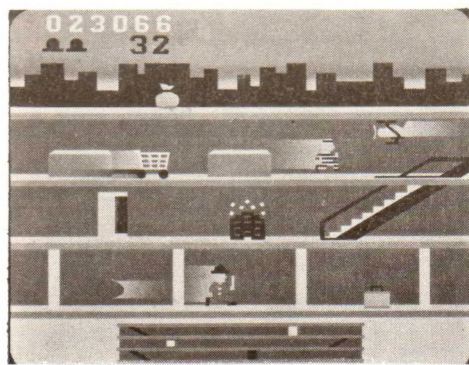
escalator; the elevator doesn't go up that far. The crook doesn't seem to need either the escalators or elevator to move from floor to floor. Instead, he just jumps up or down to the next level whenever he reaches either end of the store.

Since Kelly and the criminal aren't always on the screen at the same time, a long-range scanner is constantly displayed at the bottom of the screen. This is a miniature representation of the entire store, with the current locations of the elevator, escalators, cop and criminal monitored at all times.

As Kelly chases the thief, he must constantly watch for bouncing basketballs, stationary old-time radios, rolling shopping carts and buzzing biplanes that can all hinder or eliminate him. He must either jump over or duck under these obstacles, or the player will lose time while the cop freezes before being able to run again. If Kelly ever collides with a biplane, that cop is lost, in addition to losing time. When Kelly is on the elevator, he is safe from any of the obstacles that travel by on the various floors.

The cop can also pick up bags of money and briefcases full of loot when he touches them. These earn extra bonus points, if the player decides they are worth losing a little time to pick up.

Points are earned each time the crook is apprehended before the clock runs out. The more time remaining on the clock, the more points the player earns for catching him. Each bag of gold and each suitcase is worth 50 points. Every time the criminal is captured, another enters and the game begins again, at a higher level of play. As the game progresses, the criminal runs faster, more obstacles enter each floor, and everything speeds up.

Players each start out with three cops. One cop is lost each time the criminal escapes, the clock runs out or Kelly collides with a biplane. Extra cops are added to the player's reserves for every 10,000 points earned. When the player runs out of cops, the game is over.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: This is a very pretty game that provides all the solid action and just the right amount of cuteness that I have come to love — and expect — from Activision. At first, the play action is very good and a little difficult, until you figure out exactly what is going to work to capture that crook. Once you have the basic skills down, the action shifts into high gear, where it gets
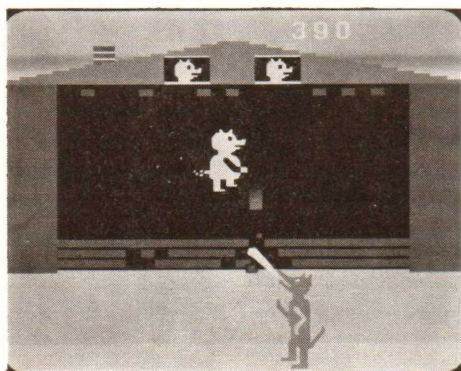
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very hard to continue playing for long. The problem is that **KEYSTONE KAPERS** doesn't do this in gradual steps. It gets tougher in leaps and bounds. I found this fact to be more than a little frustrating.

It's always a problem trying to make a game just hard enough to keep most gamers interested without making it so tough that the average player says to heck with it. I consider myself an average player, and usually don't enjoy banging my head against a wall in order to beat a game. This one is no exception.

I must also point out that even Activision should know there are down escalators in any building that has up ones. This might seem like nitpicking, but I think it would have helped the overall play if down escalators were added. I know they would have helped me score higher.

KEYSTONE KAPERS is a definite "maybe," in my book. The graphics are good enough to make this one a classic, but I doubt that the overall game play will keep it there.

ALAN: I was very impressed with the graphics on this one, too. I also agree that there should have been something added, to give the player more hope, especially in the upper levels. Still, I had a lot of fun playing **KEYSTONE KAPERS** for a long time. No matter how many crooks I could catch, or how frustrating the higher levels got, I kept pressing that Reset button for one more try.

This game resembles **PITFALL** a little, with the scrolling background and running/jumping/ducking play, but the various sections of the screen levels are stacked one atop the other. Although there is some good solid fun to be had here, it isn't nearly as challenging as that earlier smash hit. You'll enjoy **KEYSTONE KAPERS** if you don't already have a lot of climbing games laying around. Your friends will love it when they drop in for a visit. Give this one a look.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Excellent
Difficulty: Beginner - Graduate
Interest: Three - Six Months

POLARIS

From Tigervision, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade and other similar systems.

This is a two-screen sea battle arcade game for one or two players at a time, using the Atari joystick controllers. The players are in control of a Polaris nuclear submarine, defending the country from enemy attack. They must avoid and destroy enemy ships and planes in the first screen and maneuver the sub through treacherous mines in the underwater channels during the second phase of the game.

The game opens with the player's sub on the left side of the screen. The display presents a cutaway of the ocean with the sky above and sea bottom below.

Enemy planes swing in from overhead, dropping bombs toward the player's ship, while enemy subs attack with torpedoes below. The player must avoid contact with the enemy ships and weapons fire by pushing on the joystick, to move the sub in the corresponding direction. The sub fires missiles up at the planes when the red Fire button is pressed. Torpedoes can't be fired in this phase, so the only defense against the enemy subs is to avoid them and their torpedoes. Occasionally, an enemy destroyer will wander onto the screen. This ship drops depth charges and must be avoided or blasted with the submarine's missile launcher.

If the first wave of enemy planes is successfully fought off, an expert enemy dive bomber enters the scene. This plane is smaller than the others, and drops torpedoes that home in on the player's sub. This enemy can also be blasted with the player's missiles, but it's a hard target to hit because it constantly swoops, dives and flies in circles as it continues its attack.

Players who survive all the above attacks are greeted with the undersea channel screen. Here, the player's sub must traverse a straight channel without hitting the sides, or the mines that have been planted aplenty by the enemy. The passageway narrows then widens, then splits in two, then narrows again, and so on. The player's sub travels from the bottom to the top of this screen and the entire channel scrolls by as it moves.

The mines are placed in groups of three, at several locations throughout the channel, and move back and forth across the gamer's path as the player's sub approaches. The player must avoid contacting them or shoot them out of the way with the sub's torpedoes, which fire, in this mode, straight up from the vessel's nose when the red Fire button is pressed.

The game progresses through 16 levels of difficulty, with increasing numbers of squadron planes and subs, to a total of five of the former and three of the latter, with the speed of the action stepping up every four waves. The game is over when the player has lost his or her last ship.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I liked this game, though I don't believe it's destined to be a chart-topper. The two screens break things up nicely, though I wish there were more, and the graphics are above average. Things start out nice and easy then get tougher at just the right places. I thought the enemy bombers were a bit simple to knock down, but those subs can really crowd you in the higher levels of play — making the enemy's bombs deadlier.

The graphics and play in the channel screen are extremely reminiscent of Atari's **VANGUARD**, but without all the variety and challenge of that game. Still, I enjoyed the time I spent with this one and look forward to future releases from Tigervision. You might look into it if you liked **VANGUARD** and are looking for a change of pace that is along the same lines. If you don't have the money for both, **VANGUARD**'s by far better for the money.

MIKE: This is a game that wasn't real thrilling in the arcades, brought to the VCS homefront. Tigervision has tried to salvage the game by including the mined channel level and it really adds an interesting twist, but they simply didn't carry it far enough. It should have been harder to play. It's too easy to get to the higher levels and just start repeating the game at faster speeds. Speed alone wasn't enough to keep it interesting.

So — what you wind up with is a game that is beatable within the first few days of concentrated play. I really liked **POLARIS** at first, until the lack of serious challenge became evident. From that point on it was all downhill. The graphics are very good and the action is smooth but, although the dive bomber is very hard to hit, it isn't too hard to knock out, with just a little practice, because it always starts in the same place. It's easy to sit and wait for it then blast it before it's dropped its first bomb.

In short, this is a fun game to start with — but it doesn't have the staying power to hold the interest of a serious or experienced gamer very long.

RATINGS:
Concept: New
Graphics/Sound: Good
Difficulty: Novice - Student
Interest: One - Three Months

FLASH GORDON

From 20th Century Fox Games of the Century, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade and other similar systems.

FLASH GORDON is a space action arcade game for one or two players, using the Atari joystick controllers. Players must guide their space ships through the twisting tunnels of the Spider City, destroying alien attackers and saving the space men they have been holding captive there.

The game is played on a split screen. The lower half is a map of the entire city and the upper half is a close-up of the immediate area in which the player's ship is located. The ships on both screens move simultaneously. Players move their ship through either screen by pushing the joystick in the desired direction. The ship is indicated on the lower screen by a moving dot that travels through the maze and can leave one of the open ends of the tunnel and reappear at the opposite end, if the need arises.

A number of stationary horizontal lines are also located throughout the maze. These are Hatching Pods, full of young Spider Warriors, the guardians of the alien city. The gamer must move his or her ship through the city and touch one of the pods, to make the Spider Warriors hatch. Once hatched, the Warriors all appear on the close-up screen above. The Warriors try to flee as soon as they appear, and the player must move the ship on the upper screen and fire on them quickly to eliminate as many as possible.

The space ship's guns are fired when the red button is pressed. If five Warriors can be blasted before they get away, the player's ship will be enveloped in a protective shield for a short time. All upper-screen obstacles can be destroyed by merely ramming them when the shield is activated. A beep will tell the player when the shield is about to deactivate.

Disrupters also roam the corridors of the city, but they only appear on the maze screen. They look like large white crosses and chase the player's ship as it moves through the maze. Disrupters can't be blasted and they aren't directly visible in the upper screen, but they make their presence felt. Whenever a player's ship touches a Disrupter in the lower maze, the ship passes through tons of deadly galactic debris in the upper screen. Contact with any part of the floating mess will destroy the player's ship. The pieces of debris can be blasted out of the way or avoided, until the player gets the ship away from the Disrupter in the lower screen, but the upper screen fills up with the stuff quickly and it all moves fast. If the player is quick enough, he or she can blast a Disrupter Generator, a red cross that passes by quickly on the upper screen. This will temporarily halt the

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PAGE 10 — **THE LOGICAL GAMER**
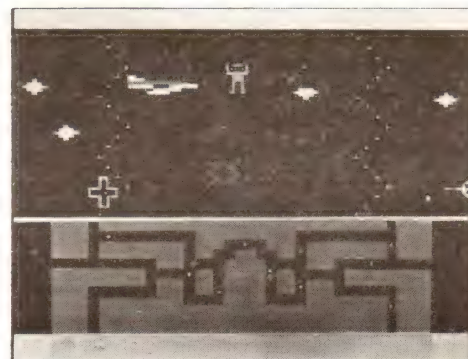
Disrupter in the maze below, so the player can move the ship away without being followed.

Patrol Ships also travel through the upper screen. These will destroy the player's ship if they collide with it. They can be eliminated by the player's lasers for extra points or simply avoided.

Space men also occasionally float past on the top screen. These are the captives the player has come to rescue. To pick them up, the player must move his or her ship into a position to touch them as they pass by.

Blasting debris earns 10 points. Patrol Ships are worth 25 points. Rescuing a space man earns 70 points. 100 points are added to the player's score for blasting a Generator. 100 points are also earned for shooting the first Warrior to hatch from a pod, 200 points for the second and so on. A 1,000 point penalty is deducted from the player's score for shooting a space man. 10 points, times the current skill level being played, are awarded for each space man rescued whenever an entire Spider City maze is cleared of Hatching Pods.

Players start out with three space ships in reserve. One extra ship is added to the reserve each time the Spider City is cleared of Hatching Pods. A new Spider City will follow the clearing of a previous one. Each new city is more difficult than the last, with Disrupters that move faster and that are better at homing in on the player's ship. Up to 39 conquered Cities can be displayed on the screen, but the player can go on clearing them as long as the ships last. When the last ship is gone, the game is over.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I liked this game immediately and still do. The graphics are crisp and colorful, the ship is responsive to joystick commands and the challenge is tough and addictive. What more could you ask? Fox's FLASH GORDON is a new twist on an old theme that works very well.

Even more than all of the above, I loved the way designer David Lubar has combined a space game with a maze game — and made it all work together in a unique way. You have to keep your eyes on both screens at the same time because the ships on both screens move together when the joystick is pushed. Either one can run into a deadly obstacle if you let your concentration slip for a second.

Things advance rapidly enough to keep it interesting, too -- for quite a while. I don't think you will be playing this one for years to come, but you'll get several months of solid fun out of it anyway. FLASH GORDON is well worth the money.

MIKE: The way licensed games have been going lately, I didn't expect much of this game when I first heard about it. I thought it would be all fluff and hokey to boot, but I was surprised at the way it played.

The maze at the bottom of the screen is a great help and the fact that those small asteroids (the debris) are thrown in when you least expect them can keep you from looking at the maze when you should, which can only spell more trouble.

I didn't think the graphics were all that great, despite what Alan just said, and I disagree that the control is so smooth. I thought it could have been a bit more resonsive.

Still, the game's strengths come from the fact that when you get to the higher levels it is very hard to stay alive and play well for long, while always leaving you with the feeling that you can do better with just one more try. I like it when a game makes me feel that way because I know I'll be coming back for more.

I do have to agree that FLASH GORDON is a good solid outer space challenge that deserves the attention of almost anyone who owns the VCS and likes good hard space action. It won't keep you coming back forever, but you'll definitely play it long enough to get your money's worth out of it.

RATINGS:

Concept: New
Graphics/Sound:
Good - Very Good
Difficulty: Student
Interest:
Six Months - One Year

JOURNEY: ESCAPE

Designed by Data Age, for use with the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games and other similar systems.

This is an arcade action game for one or two players at a time, using the joystick controllers. The object of the game is to try and get all five members of the band Journey past hoardes of groupies, photographers, money-hungry promoters and stage barriers and safely into their scarab car, to make it to the next concert on time, before the on-screen timer has counted down to zero.

The player's on-screen character looks like a long-haired man as viewed from behind. He starts at the bottom of the screen and runs upward when the joystick is pushed away from the player. All the obstacles and helpful characters on the screen automatically pass from the top to the bottom. The band member can stay at the top of the screen or run most anywhere on the lower two-thirds of the screen as the other on-screen characters continue to rush downward at him. If the player continues to push up on the joystick once the band member has reached the top of the screen, the obstacles and helpful objects will travel faster and faster.

All possible combinations and different groupings of adversary characters will greet each band member as the gamer tries to help him find the scarab car. Love-crazed groupies, looking like hearts with legs, will stop the band member and deduct $300 from the total score. Sneaky photographers look like cameras with their flash bulbs flashing. They also

cost the player time and deduct $600 from the total score when touched. Shifty-eyed promoters are large faces with shifting eyes. They always cost a band-member time with their endless offers, and cost the player $2,000. Stage barriers look like sections of fence. If a band member bumps into one of these, valuable time is lost, but no money is deducted from the total score.

Some on-screen characters will help a band-member make it to the car. Loyal roadies look like robots. If one can be contacted, he will render the band member who touched him invulnerable to the crowd for a short time. The mighty manager looks like a broad smiling face with legs. He's hard to miss because he also sports a crown, but he appears quickly and can be difficult to reach before he's gone again. Touching the manager will allow a band member to pass through the rest of the crowd unscathed, and will add $9,900 to the total score.

Each player starts with five band members and $50,000. All the band members must be lead to the Journey scarab car, one at a time, before the timer runs out. The car looks like a scarab beetle and is located near the end of the crowd. If only one member doesn't make it to the car, the whole band missed their concert date and the game is over. If all five members are led safely to the waiting vehicle, the game will begin again, with another $50,000 added to the player's total score and opposing and helpful on-screen objects that are moving faster.

The Difficulty Switches affect the challenge. When in the "A" position, things happen much faster. "B" mode is for newcomers to the game. Two players take turns by pressing on the red button when one or the other has tried his or her luck.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I was doubtful when I first heard of this game. "Excellent marketing strategy," I thought, "but -- oh! -- how most licensed games like that stink!" The good news is there is a real game here. JOURNEY ESCAPE is fast-moving and colorful, with graphics that are very well-defined and realistic, though not worthy of the term "dazzling." What I didn't care for was the game-play.

There is really too little substance to the game. You either get all five band members to the car or you don't. That's all there is to it. The other problem is that it's almost impossible to accomplish the player's goal in the time alloted unless a mighty manager or loyal roady is contacted.

In short, someone who liked Activision's KABOOM! might enjoy this game for a while. I didn't care for KABOOM! Mike did, but read on. He wasn't too thrilled with this one, either.

MIKE: Let's get this over with quickly. I didn't think JOURNEY ESCAPE lived up to its advance billing at all. The play is boring and is probably not suited to hold the interest of anyone over the age of ten. ALL is not lost, however. If you
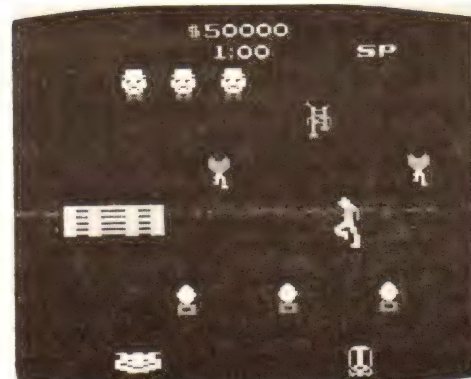
happen to be under the age of ten and like the band Journey, this one might give you a few hours of fun. Although I have to say I think JOURNEY ESCAPE should be left alone, the graphics and sound on this game do represent a vast improvement for Data Age and make me look forward to their next release.

RATINGS:

Concept: Original
Graphics/Sound:
Good - Very Good
Difficulty: Novice - Student
Interest: One Week

BERMUDA TRIANGLE

By Data Age, for the Atari VCS, Sears Tele-Games and other similar systems.

This is an arcade action game for one or two players, using the Atari joystick controllers. Gamers maneuver a mini-sub over a newly-discovered undersea city located in the Bermuda Triangle. The object of the game is to gather as many sunken artifacts from the city as possible, taking them one-by-one to a research ship that passes by on the surface overhead, while avoiding hoards of sharks, mines, unmanned enemy craft and giant squid below the surface, and an enemy ship above.

The player's mini-sub is maneuvered around the screen when the joystick is pushed in the corresponding direction. The ship starts out in the center left-hand side of the screen. It only travels and fires from left to right, although it can be moved up, down and backwards or forewards when the stick is pushed in the corresponding direction. As soon as the Fire button is pressed for the first time, the tiny ship begins traveling, with the ocean floor scrolling past below. The red button fires the mini-sub's rocket-powered projectiles once the game is in play. Projectiles travel in a straight line out from the ship's nose and destroy whatever on-screen adversary they come in contact with.

Soon, the ocean is filled

with dangerous obstacles. Giant squid, man-eating sharks and remote-controlled, saucer-shaped aquatic drones, as well as floating explosive mines with sensitive contact fuses. If the player's sub touches a squid, shark or aquatic drone, it will temporarily stall and any cargo it is carrying will be lost. Contact with a star-shaped explosive mine will result in instant vaporization.

Valuable artifacts and dangers appear on the scrolling ocean floor below. Distinctly different-looking tachyon modulator units, water dissociation modules and korbinian cubes travel by quickly. The player must try to pick these objects up by touching them with his or her sub. Bermuda Bombs are also scattered around the underwater city. These look something like Johnny Carson's desk microphone and will blow up the player's sub if it touches one.

On the surface, a brownish-colored research ship and a red enemy vessel take turns crossing the screen. The player must pick up as many valuable artifacts as possible, one at a time, and return them to the research ship by touching it. If the player's sub touches the red enemy ship, that sub will be destroyed.

Each artifact successfully returned to the research ship earns the player 600 points. 50 points are earned for every shark, squid or aquatic drone destroyed. Demolishing a mine is worth 200 points. 100 points are deducted from the player's score every time his or her mini-sub collides with an obstacle.

Either from the beginning or after the player has earned 10,000 points (depending on the game variation played), the city's automatic defense system is activated. The ruins below will begin to flash and radiate colors and light, and an occasional defensive laser beam will blaze its way through the water, destroying one of the surface ships (and anything else in its path) with every blast.

Players each start with three mini-subs and earn additional subs, up to a maximum of three in reserve at one time, for every ten thousand points earned.

Two players may play, using both joysticks, by taking turns whenever one player loses a sub. When all of the mini-subs are gone, the game is over.

There are four variations available on the BERMUDA TRI-ANGLE cartridge. Game one is for one player, with laser beams only after 10,000 points have been gained. Game two is the same as Game 1, but for two players. Game 3 starts right out with laser beams and Game 4 is the same as Game 3, for two players. The left Difficulty switch sets the level of difficulty for both players. "B" is for beginners and "A" is for the pros.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: This is undoubtedly one of the best video game cartridges Data Age has produced yet. There are many good aspects of this game that I liked. One is the fact that the

player's ship isn't necessarily destroyed every time it comes into contact with an on-screen obstacle. Sometimes you only lose points and a little time. It's a good variation that made the play a lot less frustrating, though not really any easier. It only saved my kaheetus more than once and kept me playing a lot longer than I otherwise would have been able to.

The only drawback I can see is the fact that the overall theme is really nothing new, excluding a few minor variations. This fact will keep BERMUDA TRIANGLE from reaching classic status, but it's a good video game challenge well worth considering.

ALAN: Mike said it all when he said this is one of Data Age's best so far. BERMUDA TRIANGLE is a lot of fun and very hard to master. Still, despite the difficulty, one soon catches on and starts racking up some well-earned points rapidly enough to keep the interest level high for quite a while.

I didn't care for the fact that my ship only travelled and fired in one direction, but really enjoyed overcoming the difficulty anyway. Putting that bomb right in there with the artifacts was a good idea, and so was the enemy ship at the surface. The laser beams were too hard to avoid, really, to make them worth worrying about. As the instructions so aptly point out, the best the gamer can do is avoid traveling directly below a surface ship and hope for the best.

This game might be a bit familiar in theme, as Mike pointed out, but I think there are plenty of worthwhile differences to make BERMUDA TRI-ANGLE a good addition to your arcade library. I liked it.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound:
Good - Very Good
Difficulty: Student - Graduate
Interest: Six Months

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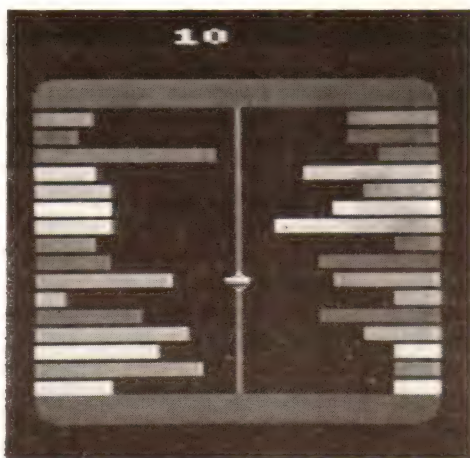
From Telesys, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade and other similar systems.

RAM IT! is an action arcade game for one or two players at a time, using the joystick controllers. The object of the game is to blast away at 32 color bars that are constantly growing in length, trying to eliminate them before they block the player's laser or the clock runs out, ending the

game.

The gamer's laser is on a pole that runs up and down the center of the screen. The color bars run down each side and grow toward the center, first one at a time, then several at once, faster and faster. Pushing up or down on the joystick makes the player's blaster slide up and down the center pole. Pushing the stick left or right will point the laser left or right. To fire the laser, the player must press the red Fire button. If the color bars should reach the center before being blasted away, they will block the gamer's ability to move the ramrod up and down, and the round will end.

Gamers start out with three ramrods and a count of 5000 on the clock. Each bar shot earns the player 10 points. If all the bars are shot back before they block the ramrod, the remaining time left on the counter will also be added to the score. In levels three through eight, flashing color bars will appear from time to time. These add bonus points to the player's score, depending on how long they are when they are shot. When the player runs out of ramrods and time, the game is over.

The eight game variations available on this cartridge offer four varieties of challenge, for one or two players. Games three through eight start out at a progressively faster pace, with flashing bonus bars. Games one and two are for children, with no bonus bars and regular color bars that grow much more slowly.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I've played a lot of games that are similar to this one, and never really liked any of them. RAMIT is no different, if you ask me.

There are some really nice graphics on this cartridge, and the sound effects are very good. Still, the overall play is so simple and repetitive it bored me to tears in no time. Sorry, Telesys. RAMIT is a graphic improvement on a tired theme, but a graphic improvement only. I never liked the theme when it was still original.

MIKE: This one features lots of color, that is very pleasing to the eye, and the need for quick and accurate movement, in order to score well. Normally, this would make the game one of those that will be played by you forever, but this is just not the case with this one. The play is very simple in its basic premise, and that's the downfall of RAMIT. There is nothing to do here but slide, turn, shoot and get frustrated.

It's basically a vertical slide-'n'-shoot and nothing more. We can't save a damsel in distress, the world or even ourselves. What we do save is some nondescript gun in the middle of growing lines of color. I had thought we were past that stage of video game development a long time ago. I think you need to pass this one by because you most likely already have a very similar game sitting unplayed on your shelf. Pull it out and play it again instead. You'll be money

ahead for it. In all fairness, RAM IT is probably prettier than what you already have along the same lines, but it really won't offer you anything new in the way of challenge.

RATINGS:

Concept: Too Familiar
Graphics/Sound:
Good - Very Good
Difficulty: Novice
Interest: One Day - One Week

STARGUNNER
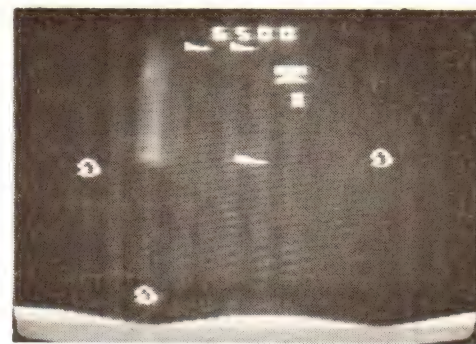
From Telesys, for the Atari VCS, Sears' Tele-Games Video Arcade and other similar systems.

STARGUNNER is an arcade space game for one or two players, using the Atari Joystick controller. The scenario, as described in the elaborate story that accompanies the cartridge, is this: The player is the last Stargunner left on the planet of Yarthae. The outlaw Sphyzygi, along with their symbio-droid, Bobo, are attacking. The player must pilot his or her Stargunner ship around the screen and wipe out the enemy before they destroy the last stronghold of the empire.

The display is one of rolling hills below and the black void of space behind. The player's ship is maneuvered around the screen by pushing the joystick in the corresponding direction, and the hills below zip by as the space vessel races along. Depending upon the position of the Difficulty switches, the ship may be pointed and moved in either direction, or moved in all directions while it remains pointed in only one. The latter option intensifies the challenge by limiting the direction in which the player can fire.

The enemy's droid travels back and forth across the top of the screen, constantly dropping bombs down at the player's ship. The Sphyzygi come in three types, forming on the screen from the edges inward, like a cosmic implosion of color and sound. One by one, then in ever-increasing numbers, Sphyzygi saucers, space buzzies and squeezers come after the player's ship. If one should form right where the player's ship is located, that ship is gone. Otherwise, they must be avoided as they zip around the screen, but they don't shoot at the hero ship. Bobo handles that end of the action.

The aliens come in three waves per level. Flying horizontally, each successive level pits the player against one more on-screen creature at a time than in the level before it. An unlimited number of levels can be attained, but

each features faster-moving creatures than the one before, and they just keep getting smarter and greater in number as the game progresses.

The player can shoot his or her laser guns and blast the alien creatures from space by pressing on the red Fire button. When either an alien or a player's ship explodes, it disintegrates outward in a multi-colored flash that spreads to all four corners of the screen, then reconverges in a different spot. The four brightly-colored pieces are harmless when they are shooting across the screen, but are deadly when they come together and re-form.

The cartridge offers eight game variations, four each for one or two players, respectively. Three starting Saucer speeds can be selected, and there are two children's games included. The creatures and Bobo move very slowly in the children's levels.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: I can see a definite improvement in the graphics on games from Telesys. Unfortunately, the game play on their offerings is still, for the most part, not up to what I usually expect.

This is not an easy game to master, or even do well at. I thought the explosions and following recreations of the new ships and creatures were very well done, but the overall display, and especially the graphics on the player's ship, leave a lot to be desired.

I guess I missed the scrolling screens that are seen so often on a lot of the games today. The fact that **STARGUNNER** is played on a single screen, with no other objective than to stay alive, made it all bore me rather quickly. I have to say that the action is the best since Telesys' earlier release, **COSMIC CREEPS**, which I really enjoyed, and far superior to their first release, **COCO NUTS**.

Still, I have to conclude that this is not one of the best of this type of game. It would be a good choice if it was produced for the Odyssey-2, but there have already been a lot of similar games done better for the VCS. I'd overlook it if I were you.

ALAN: Right. This game is unadorned, but I thought it was far from boring. I had a lot of fun playing **STARGUNNER** because it was unadorned. This one is simple, and I don't doubt the action could get pretty repetitious after a while, but there is a lot of challenge here, despite the silly story that accompanies the game. I've heard it compared to **DEFENDER** and similar games, and, in comparison to some of these, I can only agree that it doesn't fall into the category of Classic Video Games.

What we have here is a deceptively simple game that anyone could walk in on, take up the stick and try out -- then get hooked into a solid hour or two of furious combat. It's not one for days and days of uninterrupted play, but I think you will find yourself pulling it out for a simple change of pace often enough to make it worth

the price.

Don't get me wrong -- I loved **DEFENDER**, but that game was so complex that I got frustrated quickly and only play it in brief spurts. I've pulled **STARGUNNER** out for entertaining guests and playing with my younger son more often. The graphics <u>are</u> similar to the type produced for the Odyssey II and there <u>is</u> only one very simple screen, but this game gives you unlimited levels of difficulty and action that builds slowly enough to keep your interest, to a height of activity that makes things rough enough for the best of you. Look into it.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics: Fair - Good
Difficulty: Beginner - Student
Interest: One Week - One Month

5200 FOOTBALL
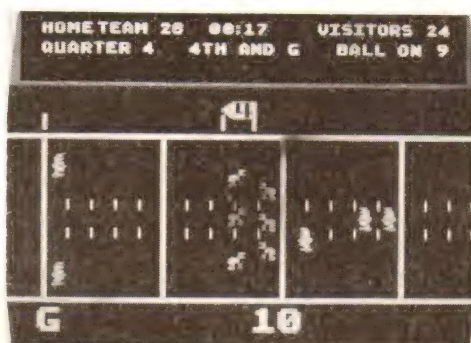
From Atari, Incorporated, for their 5200 Super System video game console.

This program cartridge brings the game of football, for one or two players, into 5200 system owners' living-rooms. The game is played with the standard keypad/joystick controllers, or with the optional trackball controller, soon to come. The scores, game status and special instructions are displayed across the screen.

All the basic rules apply here, along with some minor modifications. Teams are made up of six players each, with one always under the player's control, when he or she pushes the joystick in the desired direction. The ball can be run, but never fumbled. It can also be passed, and maybe intercepted. Field goals and punts are possible, but the ball can't be kicked out of bounds. Two-minute warnings and time-outs aren't allowed, and there are no penalties.

The joystick controls the odd-colored player on each team. Either lower fire button is used to pass, kick, hike the ball early, free-up the defensive control-player before the snap and transfer control from one player to another. The keypad buttons numbered one through six are used for setting up formations and calling up plays.

There are eighteen offensive and six defensive plays to choose from. Single players can only play offense against the computer, switching teams throughout the play. All eighteen offensive plays are executed from three positions. Two playbooks are included with the game cartridge, one for "home" and one for "visitors." They have been designed to open and easily lay spread out in front

of a player for ready reference.

Touchdowns count for seven points. Field goals are worth three points. Safeties score two points. The clock runs twice as fast as normal time. Statistics from recent NFL play have been averaged to develop the odds used for play actions and consequences.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: This is yet another version of America's favorite fall pastime. There are now so many different versions of Football that there are a wide variety of games to choose from. It just depends on which system you own. Since this is the only version of Football currently available for the 5200, you're stuck with it if you want to play the game.

This isn't the most interesting version I've seen, but it doesn't really have that many bad points. There is the problem that it is too easy to intercept passes. Also, in this version, if the runner gets any lead at all, a touchdown seems to be almost a sure thing. I suppose this makes the game more realistic than some versions, which "wrap around" and allow the player to run off the screen and come out on the other side, way in front.

All in all the playbook is complex. The number of plays that are available lends to a more interesting game of strategy than some versions, but there is still nothing really new about the game or the concepts involved. If you own the 5200 and want to play Football, you had better get this game. It might be a while before anyone else produces one and they would have to work pretty hard to come up with something substantially better.

ALAN: Again I leave the sports game reviewing to Mike. I'm not into Football at all, but I was impressed with the movement of the on-screen characters and overall graphic display. The playbooks were nice and I especially appreciated the glossary in the back of the instructions. So will younger players and those interested in

the video game but not really into the sport. I have to go with whatever Mike says on this one.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Excellent
Difficulty: Novice
Interest: Infinite

5200 MISSILE COMMAND
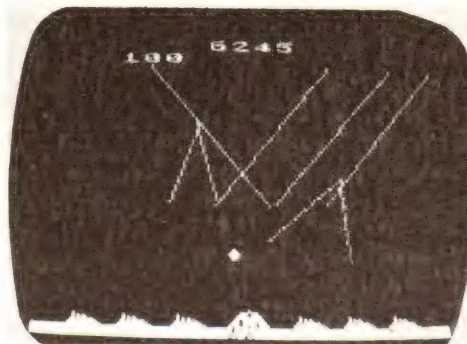
Designed by Atari for their 5200 "Super System" video game console.

MISSILE COMMAND is such a long-standing arcade classic it barely needs description. Still, for the totally un-initiated, most of the details of play are still necessary. For one or two players, gamers must try to defend six cities, indicated on-screen by buildings, three on each side at the bottom of the screen, from a barrage of incoming intergalactic missiles, bombers, killer satellites and other deadly vessels of destruction.

The player defends the city with an ABM missile base located at the bottom center of the screen, directly between the six buildings. Missiles are launched when either or both bottom action buttons are pressed. They travel up toward a cursor the player maneuver with the joystick and explode where the cursor was located at the time the missile was released.

Six missiles at a time are loaded into the player's base, up to a total of 30 per wave. If the base doesn't launch any more ABM's when the button is pressed, either more missiles aren't yet loaded and

ready to fire or eight ABM explosions are already visible on-screen. Enemy attacks come in waves that last 30 to 45 seconds. Each consecutive wave is more intense than the last. Enemy bombers and killer satellites also enter the screen from either side, dropping more missiles that quickly split into many. Smart bombs that can stop and avoid the player's protective fire start homing in on the buildings during the sixth wave.

The enemy can destroy as many as three cities per wave, and can temporarily knock out the player's missile base as many times as he or she allows.

Points are awarded for each missile, satellite, bomber and smart bomb destroyed, multiplied by the current wave number. Bonus points are awarded at the end of each wave for all cities still standing. One city is rebuilt for every 10,000 points earned.

The game ends when the enemy has destroyed all of the player's cities and "THE END" appears on the television screen.

Gamers may use the 5200 keypad to select games for one or two players at a time, skipping to whatever level the player wishes to start the game at and with or without bonus cities added every 10,000 points. A practice session can also be played, offering only smart bombs.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I have always felt that **MISSILE COMMAND** was one of Atari's best classic video game challenges, in the arcade, on computer and for the VCS. Now 5200 owners can play this still-viable venerable arcade classic with all the detail, complexity and excitement of the arcade original.

I thought the display was crisp and the graphics very true to the original. Placement of the cursor would be enhanced with the trackball controller, but was nonetheless fairly smooth and accurate with the standard 5200 joystick as well.

There are very few games that have been out as long as **MISSILE COMMAND** that still make by heart race and sweat pop out on my forehead every time I play them. This is one of the best home versions of the game currently available. Get it and have a blast.

MIKE: This is a very simple game for me to review. If you like **MISSILE COMMAND** then you should own this game. You can't get simpler than that. There might still be a few of you who aren't familiar with the game, but I'll bet there are very few. Even if you've never heard of it before, you should get this one or you'll be missing one heck of a rare treat.

I liked **MISSILE COMMAND** for the VCS and this version gives me every reason to like the game even more. The constantly increased attack keeps you jumping every second and the challenge is even more intense and difficult on the 5200. This might just be worth getting even if you already have the VCS version. ENJOY!

RATINGS:

Concept: Original
Graphics/Sound: Excellent
Difficulty: Student - Graduate
Interest: Infinite

TRON: SOLAR SAILER

From Mattel Electronics, for their Intellivision and Intellivision II Master Component video game consoles and for Sears' Super Video Arcade, to be used in conjunction with the Intellivoice Voice Synthesis Module.

TRON: SOLAR SAILER is the first voice arcade game based on the Disney movie, for one player at a time. Flynn is trapped inside the computer, just as he was in the movie. His only way out, with the player's help, is to find the Master Control Program and overload its circuits, before it does him in for good.

This TRON game is played out in two phases. The first phase is played on a grid of concentric circles, made up of numbered tracks and sectors that lead to the Master Control Program at the center of the grid. The player starts out traveling along the outermost ring of this circle and tries to fight his or her way to the center. In the middle of the grid, the player is faced with what looks like an endless tunnel, with large white numbers (binary digits) flying outward toward the player at blinding speed. The gamer must capture the right numbers and use them to change the override code at the bottom of the screen. This will overload the MCP and help towards winning the game.

At the beginning of the game, and whenever the player moves one track closer to the center of the grid, a screen comes up showing the current location of the solar sailer, and the sector the sailer must reach next. Tron will also give the player a verbal read-out of the access code, which must be entered by the player when the sailer reaches the goal sector on the grid, to gain access to the next track closer to the MCP.

The concentric circles that make up the maze are broken into eight sectors. The screen display shows only a small portion of each sector as the player's solar sailer travels along the game grid. The sailer follows the grids and can only change directions at intersections, when the player presses any one of the top six buttons on the keypad. Pressing on either top action button will make the sailer accelerate. Either bottom action button will brake it.
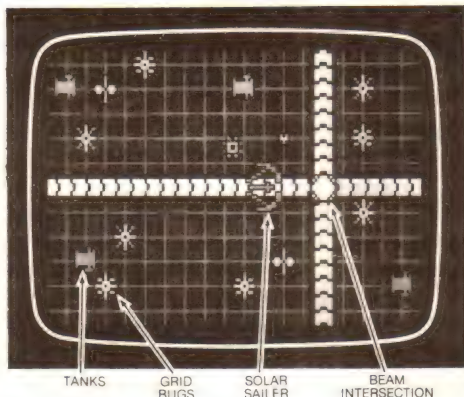
Along the grid, off the path the solar sailer follows, there are tanks, grid bugs and other opponents the MCP has sent out to try and stop Flynn. The tanks fire at the sailer as it travels by, and sap precious energy whenever they score a hit. The gamer can blast all opponents by pressing on the disc to fire, but firing at them uses valuable energy, which is limited. The energy supply is monitored and verbally reported as the player travels along the grid beams. To add more energy, he or she must turn the Solar Sailer at a beam intersection. Each new segment of the grid the Sailer hops onto provides added energy, but in limited amounts. As the Sailer uses up the available energy on each grid beam, it is not replaced. The more often each line is travelled, the less energy each has to offer. The number of grid bugs scattered around indicates the amount of available energy remaining in each segment.

The tracks along which the sailer travels are intersected by broad red bands indicating each new sector as it is entered. A voice will announce which sector it is. Vertical I/O beams also cross the gamer's path. It is one of these, in the Goal Sector, that the player must try to reach, before running out of energy. When the desired I/O beam is encountered, the game will pause for the player to enter the correct Access Code, given at the start of each new track. If the correct code is entered, the player's Solar Sailer will be transported to Sector Zero, one or two tracks closer to the MCP. If the wrong number is entered, the game will unfreeze and carry on.

As the sailer gets closer to the MCP, the struggle intensifies. Recognizers enter the scene, and must be shot quickly. If one touches the Sailer, it will carry it back one or two sectors away from the MCP and the player will have to fight his or her way through the grid again.

As each new track is entered, the player will be presented with a new Goal Sector and Access Code to remember. Pressing the "Location" key on the keypad will give a verbal readout of the player's current track and sector location, in case there is any question.

Phase One continues until the player works his or her sailer all the way to Track Zero, at the center of the grid. If the player's solar sailer runs completely out of fuel along the way, the game will end. The MCP was victorious.

When the MCP is reached, phase two begins. Here the
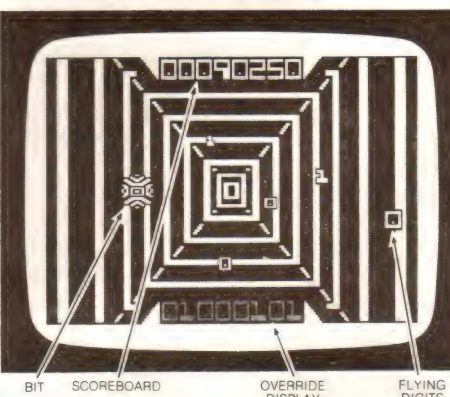
player must decode the computer and overload its circuits before time runs out. If enough of the computer's vital transmissions can be intercepted, the player will win a 50,000 point bonus and, eventually, just might overcome the MCP.

The Phase Two display is of the heart of the MCP, with large zeros and ones flying out at the player from the center of what looks like a deep cave or tunnel. A floating circle, or "bit," is also on-screen. The bit acts as the player's cursor, and is moved around the screen by the player when he or she presses on a corresponding side of the disc.

Across the bottom of the screen is an eight digit code, displayed in red. The voice will tell the player the override code, which is also made up of eight digits, all ones and zeroes.

After the override code has been announced, the ones and zeroes will start flying out from the center of the MCP. The player must move the Bit with the disc and intercept these flying digits, then enter them in the correct position in the display at the bottom of the screen, by pressing the corresponding location buttons on the keypad, to make the bottom display match the override display. The voice will guide the player with a "Yes" or "No" when each selection is made.

Yellow ones and zeroes are another obstacle. If one of these collides with the player's bit, it will automatically enter itself at random into the bottom display, most often not where the gamer would like them to and often changing a digit that has already been corrected.

Data transmissions last only a short time, and all eight digits must be entered before the transmission stops. If the player can't get the code, the MCP lets him or her hear about it, the Overload Factor (explained shortly) will be reduced by ten and the player must keep trying, with data transmissions that get progressively shorter with each unsuccessful attempt.

The screen borders turn red if the player has won. Theme music plays and the Overload Factor is increased by 100. The player has defeated the master Control Program. The player can decide at that point to collect an additional 50,000 points and quit victorious or go for broke, trying for an overtime period and more points. To get those overtime points, however, the player must block every single transmission that follows or forfeit the 50,000 point bonus and lose the game.

The Overload Factor is much more important than the player's total score, as overloading the computer is the name of the game. It starts at 50. Every time the player reaches a track closer to the MCP for the first time, the Overload Factor is increased by five. Whenever a Recognizer pushes the player's Soler Sailer back, the Overload Factor is reduced by 5. The Overload Factor is increased by 10 every time the player correctly completes the override code display. If the player fails to complete the code in time, the Overload

YOU ARE NOW IN GAME PHASE 1

TANKS   GRID BUGS   SOLAR SAILER   BEAM INTERSECTION

YOU ARE NOW IN GAME PHASE 2

BIT   SCOREBOARD   OVERRIDE DISPLAY   FLYING DIGITS

(CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE)

factor is decreased by 10.

Grid Bugs are worth 25 points when hit by the solar sailer's fire on track seven, and increase in value by 25 points on each track closer to the MCP. Tanks hit score 75 points on track seven, and increase by 75 points for each track closer to the MCP. Recognizers are each worth 250 points when they first appear, on tracks four and five, and are worth 125 points more the closer they are to the MCP.

A bonus of 5000 points is awarded for entering the first track closer to the MCP. The next track closer earns a 1,000-point bonus. 10,000 points are added to the player's score if he or she can enter the decoding phase. Before completing the Override Display, each bit entered into the code is worth 250 points. If the code is entered correctly, it's worth 5000 points. After entering the correct display and overloading the MCP, each bit correctly entered is worth 500 points. Successfully completing the code display on time is then worth 10,000 points.

The "Score" key on the keypad will display the score and overload factor at any time during Phase One play. During Phase Two play, the score is displayed continuously at the top of the screen.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: This, I hope, is the last of the Tron games to come from the people at Intellivision. I haven't been a big fan of any of the previous Tron games and this one is really no exception to that rule. The graphics of this are up to the usual high standards for the system, however, so I have no complaint there.

This is a voice cartridge, though, and I thought it failed to provide the needed addition to the game that would make it a great hit. Maybe I was just spoiled by B-17 BOMBER.

The play action is faster in SOLAR SAILER, but the overall concept and play just isn't what I would hope for from an Intellivison game. I think this one will fall into the same category the movie did — pretty to look at but no real substance to hold the attention. I would look elsewhere for quick action. There are definitely better Intellivoice games.

ALAN: Boy, I don't know about Tron-haters! Mike hated that movie so much he's taking it out on Mattel for making him review their Tron games. I have to disagree with him here. I remember disagreeing with him about TRON: MAZE-A-TRON, too. TRON: SOLAR SAILER is even better.

There are some things I didn't like. For one, the keypad buttons didn't always make the sailer change course when I pressed them, and I hated trying to hit the enemy by firing and aiming simultaneously with the disc controller. The inherent inaccuracy and missed turns, especially when I was running very low on energy, coupled with the movement of the Solar Sailer, made it better to just barrel down the same course for as far as possible, turning only when I absolutely had to, to recharge my energy supply, and firing as little as possible. But those Recognizers soon destroyed even this strategy.

Still, SOLAR SAILER is one of the best Tron games yet. The maze is huge and the battle gets furious, especially in Phase Two, if you can get there. If you have the voice module and haven't bought MAZE-A-TRON yet, forget that one. It's only marginally good in comparison. I even liked SOLAR SAILER's sound effects better.

RATINGS:

Concept: Original
Graphics/Sound:
Good — Very Good
Difficulty:
Student — Graduate
Interest:
One Week — Six Months

SHARK! SHARK!

From Mattel Electronics, for their Intellivision and Intellivision II Master Components.

SHARK! SHARK! is an arcade video simulation game for one or two players. Gamers must maneuver a fish around an underwater display, eating other fish, but only if they are smaller, or the same size, to grow larger. They must also avoid or attack (carefully), a large and deadly shark who makes constant on-screen appearances. The background of this game is a seemingly tranquil one, at the bottom of the sea. Coral and aquatic plants decorate the bottom. Bubbles drift lazily toward the top.

The player's fish begins very small, floating in the center of the screen. Other fish of different sizes and colors immediately swim on and off-screen. Gamers move their fish by pressing on the disc controller, to send him in the desired direction. The fish will continue to move in the direction he's been headed until the player changes directions or presses either of the Intellivision controller's side buttons to stop him. Pressing either of the top three keypad buttons will make the fish dart at top speed, in the direction he was last headed. In the two-player mode, one gamer controls the small yellow fish and the other a small red fish. Both are on-screen at the same time. Single players control the little yellow fish.

Gamers each start with a reserve of five fishes, appearing one at a time. They must be moved around the

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screen, to gobble up as many other fish as they can, earning points for each gobble. The gamer's fish will grow one size for every 1,000 points earned, and then can eat larger fish (the same size or smaller). When one player's fish is larg-

er than the other's, that one is game for the feast as well. The gamers' fish just keeps getting bigger, up to size five, until he is gobbled up or chews on a fish that is bigger. If either of them eats a fish larger than themselves, that fish is lost. A new fish, if there are any left in reserve, will take its place, but it will again start at size one.

The other fish on the screen, and an occasional seahorse, also chase down and eat those that are smaller, passing, up the larger ones that can eat them instead. The player's fish can be eaten by others of the same size or color. Other on-screen hazards — and meals -- to watch for include crabs and lobsters, which jump up from the bottom of the screen and try to grab fish as they go by, the deadly sharks that gobble up everything in their path and move very quickly doing it, and jellyfish, slow-moving, but every bit as deadly as the shark, because they are always untouchable. Fortunately, the jellyfish only enter the game after the player has grown his or her fish as large as it can get.

Gamers can kill the lobster and crabs, but only if the controlled fish is at least size four, and then only when the crustaceans are falling back down from a jump up off of the bottom. One bonus fish will be added to wwe reserves of a player who kills a crab or lobster. The shark can be killed by a player's fish, but the only way to accomplish this feat is to relentlessly attack his tail again and again. The shark moves quickly, however, reversing itself and snapping up such pests, if the fish is not quick enough to keep its distance. The larger the player's fish during the attack, the more points earned for each nibble on the shark's tail and the fewer nibbles it will take to kill him. If the shark is killed, the victorious player will earn a bonus fish.

Computer fish eaten earn a player 100 - 350 points, depending on the size of the fish. The other player's fish (in the two-player game) is worth 150 - 300 points, depending on his size when eaten. Nibbling on the shark's tail is worth 150 - 350 points, depending on the size of the player's fish that is doing the nibbling. A smaller fish will have to bite at the shark's tail seven times to kill him, and then once less for each size

bigger the fish grows. Killing a crab or lobster earns the player 500 - 750 points, depending on the current level of play.

There are five levels of play available in Mattel's **SHARK! SHARK!** Each successively more difficult game is entered as soon as the score climbs sufficiently to reach that level. Players may also select from four overall game speeds, before the action begins, by pressing on either the desired keypad button or the disc.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I really enjoyed this game right from the start. At first it looked a little silly, but after I gave it a good hard try, I was hooked (if you'll pardon the obvious pun). The graphics are really nice, the motion and response are fluid and the challenge is simply never-ending. Throw a second player's fish into the frey and it all gets downright pulse-pounding!

I have to give Mattel's designers an "A" for originality, for both the concept and execution of **SHARK! SHARK!** They have taken what could have been just another kid's game and made it outstanding for play at any age. The feeling I got while playing **SHARK! SHARK!** was uncanny. The movement and atmosphere is realistic enough to make you want to hold your breath. This is a "must buy" that will make the whole family happy.

MIKE: I see this as a very interesting children's game that plays very well for adults, too. In fact, it would be hard to classify this as a children's game at all, though the overall theme would suggest it. I enjoyed playing **SHARK! SHARK!** a lot, with my kids and with my peers. I also found myself playing it all alone late into the night. It can get that addictive if you give it a chance.

SHARK! SHARK! is not an overly complicated game. It's very simple to play. But — the apparent simplicity of this one is deceptive, and the challenge is engrossing, demanding "just another try." Unless you only like fast-moving shoot-em-ups, this would be a good one to consider. If you have children 5 - 10, it's almost a must. Enjoy **SHARK! SHARK!**

RATINGS:

Concept: Original
Graphics/Sound:
Good - Very Good
Difficulty: Beginner - Student
Interest: Nine Months

SHARP SHOT

From Mattel, for their Intellivision and Intellivision II Master Component video game consoles.

This is an arcade target game, for one or two players at a time, especially designed for children ages four and up. The cartridge offers four completely different types of target challenges. Each game is controlled very simply, with the disc being used to aim and the

side buttons used to fire or pass. The first four buttons on the keypad controller are used to select which **SHARP SHOT!** challenge the player chooses to try.

Game one is a scaled down Intellivision **FOOTBALL**, offering the gamer simple passing against the clock. The player must press any side action button to pass the football, whenever the downfield receivers are in the clear. Each completed pass scores seven points. An on-screen clock counts down the time remaining. Incomplete and intercepted passes don't count against the player, but they do cost time. Two players take turns by pressing on the disc controller when the others' time is up.

Game two takes the player to outer space, challenging him or her to a battle for the universe. Two gunsights appear on-screen and alien vessels swing into view. The gamer must press any side fire button to blast the extraterrestrials out of the sky when they are in the cross-hairs, scoring one point for every target demolished. It is possible to hit bunches of targets at once and increase the score. Again, the action is played against the clock, or a human opponent. Both gamers fire at the same targets, using both on-screen cross-hairs, in the two-player game.

Game three is a sea battle. Enemy ships fill the waters above and the player must gun down as many of them as possible before time runs out. The player's submarine is located at the bottom of the screen. As the targets maneuver directly overhead, the player must press an action button, to send a torpedo zooming straight up at them. As many as three torpedoes may be released at a time. Each ship sunk adds one point to the gamer's score. Two gamers may take turns by switching players when the others' time has run out.

Game four features a maze full of monsters, ala' **ADVANCED DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS.** Two gamers can play at the same time, or one can play alone. Each shoots arrows up through the maze from the bottom of the screen, trying to wipe out the conglomeration of ghastly creatures that roam its halls. The creatures try to reach a treasure on each side of the screen, touch it, then to touch a pyramid at the bottom center of the display. Each monster shot scores that player one point. If a monster touches a player's treasure, then the pyramid, one point is deducted from his or her total score. Arrows are blasted one after the other, until the timer runs out, and can be caromed through the passageways, to cover more than one hall at a time with a single shot.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: This cartridge was designed as a practice session for all four of the original Mattel games the various scenarios were pulled from. It's a good thing the box says, specifically, "for children age four and up," because no adult would buy a cartridge to practice games they already own (at least, I wouldn't!). As far as children are concerned, I don't
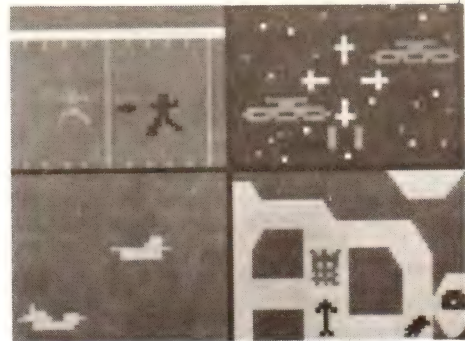
think they need **SHARP SHOT** for the practice, either.

I think it's better to let the kids play the real game. Sit down with them and let them practice on you. The interaction alone will be better than their constantly performing the same maneuvers against the computer over and over again.

Stay away from this one. It's not at all what it's been cracked up to be. If you don't own the originals, then go out and buy them. It's better to spend more money and at least get something you will enjoy, then it is to waste your money on lame practice rounds that don't live up to the originals they were patterned after.

ALAN: Mike's rather outspoken attitude about this game is right on target. There really is too little here to offer even younger children some semblence of a challenge on this one. Except for the maze/monster shoot, the challenge is virtually lacking altogether. The overall action is basically mundane and mighty repetitious. My five-year-old had some fun playing **SHARP SHOT** with me during my required review time, but quickly lost interest and went on to doing something else, while I was stuck still putting in my time.

I think what this one needed was more happening in the other three games. The fact that the monsters in the maze shoot and the way they could reach your treasure, then steal points from your score, made that shoot-out more than just another aim-and-fire blah maneuver. The others, however, lacked even this much return fire. I'm afraid I have to put my thumbs down, too.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Good
Difficulty: Novice
Interest: One Day - One Week

SWORDS AND SERPENTS

From Imagic, for Intellivision and Intellivision II Master Component video game consoles, and for Sears' Super Video Arcade.

This is an adventure/quest game for one or two players. The object of the game is to explore all four floors of an expansive dungeon that is laden with treasures and riddled with danger. In the two-player game, one player is a fearless warrior and the other a powerful wizard, fighting in a cooperative effort to gather treasure and try to reach the dragon's room.

The game begins with the hero or heroes standing in a massive cavern that is filled

with dozens of rooms of various sizes. The view is from overhead, showing the tops of the walls and the head, shoulders and sword of each on-screen character. Only about one-tenth of the complete floor is visible on the screen at any one time. The arrangement of the rooms forms a complex maze of doorways and passages.

The Warrior Prince and/or Wizard start out in the Fortress Store Room. The Wizard and Warrior are both moved when the controlling player presses on the corresponding side of the disc. Pressing either top side button will make the heros move backwards when the disc is pressed. The right controller moves the Warrior, the left the Wizard. Two different overlays display the various options available for each character.

The Prince stays in the center of the screen at all times, but the Wizard can wander off-screen. If he does, he paces impatiently and may be found in a slightly different place than where he left.

The two heroes meet increasing numbers of Phantom Knights and Red Sorcerers as they continue along their journey. Phantom Knights are black and wield a deadly sword. They can pass through walls and move quickly, attacking the Wizard and Prince from all sides. Red Sorcerers are evil wizards that appear in a puff of smoke and hurl deadly fireballs at the Prince. They cannot detect the Wizard's presence, but can injure or kill him if he gets in the path of a fireball intended for the Prince. Either hero loses half a life every time they are hit by a Phantom Knight's sword or scorched by a Red Sorcerer's fireball, and will change color to indicate that when they are hit once more, one hero's life is gone.

Each hero begins the game with nine lives. Several Lanterns of Life are scattered throughout all four dungeon floors. These will restore one half-life when either hero covers it and the player presses the "Enter" button. This only works when the hero is injured, and doesn't replace lives lost. Another reincarnation will replace the Warrior or Wizard when either one loses a life, until there are no reincarnations left.

Either player may call up the Status screen at any time during the game by pressing the "Status" button on either controller. This brings up a chart display showing the number of lives remaining, number of treasures in hand, number of treasures stored and the total point value of stored treasures.

The Warrior Prince defends himself with the enchanted sword that he always holds out in front of him, ready for battle. The sword is swung when the player presses on the disc, turning the Warrior Prince. Touching any of his adversaries with the sword will eliminate them from the screen.

The Wizard casts spells in the direction he is pointing when the corresponding button on his keypad controller is pressed, but he must first acquire those spells by reading

a number of scrolls that have been judiciously placed throughout the dungeon. To read a scroll, the Wizard must be placed directly over it, then the "Read Scroll" button pressed. The contents of the scroll will then appear on-screen, indicating the magical powers the Wizard has acquired. To cast a spell, the player controlling the Wizard must press on the disc to turn him and face his adversary, then press on the appropriate key to activate the desired magic power.

The spells that are available allow the Wizard to freeze a Phantom Knight momentarily or throw fireballs at them and their companion Red Sorcerers. He can also attain the ability to heal the Prince Warrior's wounds, make him run twice as fast or make him temporarily invincible (but also temporarily immobile). After reading the right scrolls, he can also destroy walls on contact, move

himself and the Prince immediately to the storeroom to stash treasures that have been collected, or make himself temporarily invincible (but also temporarily immobile). He can also, with the right ability, instantly find the Prince, should the old Wizard accidentally wander off the screen and lose him.

Some scrolls are transporters. When they are read by either hero, these scrolls will immediately send them to another similar scroll, located on the opposite side of the dungeon. These are the only scrolls the Prince may make use of. He can read the others, but not acquire the powers they will bestow upon the Wizard.

A major point of the quest is to collect as many of the valuable treasures that are scattered throughout all the floors of the dungeon as possible. To collect a treasure, the player must place either hero directly over it, then

press the "Enter" button on the keypad controller. Points aren't scored, however, until the heroes return to the Store Room on the first level and place the collected treasures in the chest that is located there. Each hero is only allowed to carry up to six treasures at a time.

Stairways lead to the lower levels of the dungeon, but they can only be used when the heroes have found the key that is located somewhere on each floor. Keys are picked up the same way as treasures. The instruction booklet presents the gamer with a map of the first floor, but players are on their own on floors two, three and four. These are uncharted sections of the massive dungeon.

The fourth floor contains a room with a dreadful dragon. If the dragon can be conquered, a very special secret will be

revealed to the player. Imagic is offering a free poster to players who can detail all the treasures on each floor and the secret the dragon is guarding.

50 points are earned for each treasure found and stored on the first floor. Second-floor treasures are worth 100 points. Third and fourth level treasures are worth 150 and 200 points each, respectively. An additional reincarnation is earned for every 300 valor points earned during the quest.

There are three different types of quests available for play on SWORDS AND SERPENTS. In the one-player mode, the Warrior Prince is alone and un-aided by his Wizard friend. This option is best for prac-tice, and to familiarize new players with the layout of the rooms and treasures, for as far as the Prince can make it. The second option is a two-player mode featuring both heroes, each controlled by one gamer. The Wizard starts out with the ability to freeze Phantom War-riors in this mode, but must gather all other spells as he travels. A two-player Magic game is also available for play. This one is identical to the regular two-player game, except the Warrior starts out with three uses each of the fireballs, healing, and fast feet powers, as well as the unlimited ability to freeze Phantom Warriors.
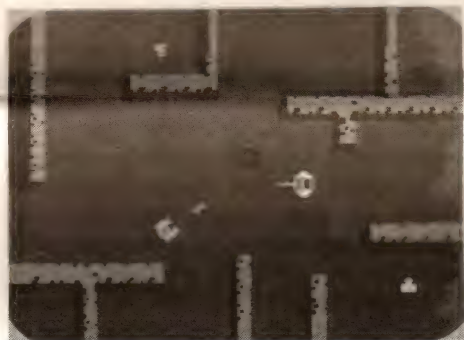
OPINIONS:

MIKE: This is an excellent game for Intellivision play. It must use most of the abilities a-vailable in the console. The graphics aren't the prettiest I've seen on the system, but they provide a large complex maze and enough visual details to make this one a joy to play. Unfortunately, SWORDS AND SER-PENTS is not a lot of fun in the single-player mode. It's extremely hard to make it very far through all the dungeon levels without the aid of the wiley old Wizard and his spells. Still, at least that option is available, which is more than I can say for most two-player Intellivision games.

The two-player mode, how-ever, is near the peak of per-fection, with you and your partner working diligently to-gether to get the treasures and reach the serpent. I like co-operative two-player video games for a change of pace and this is one of the best I've seen so far. If you know me, you know I don't dish out such accolades easily. I dish them out for this one. Imagic has created a video adventure that really shines.

ALAN: I loved this one, too. Mike is right when he says the graphics aren't all that fan-tastic, considering the system, but I can certainly tell where the memory went instead. This is one of the most complex mazes I've ever had to wind my way through. Also, because of the way you see so little of the entire layout on the screen at any one time, there is a constant feeling that you are playing a first-person adven-ture, rather than looking on from overhead. It's really hard to plan for the unexpected and very easy to run yourself down countless dead-ends.

I found myself wishing the action was a little faster, but only for a little while. I also wished there were a few more different kinds of opponents to contend with, but Imagic de-signer Brian P. Dougherty has made things very tough on the player as it is. The Phantom Knights and Red Sorcerers very soon come fast and furious and they are tricky, coming in from all sides, each never giving up the fight until they have been overcome. I especially liked the artful sound of clanging swords when hero and adversary met, and the way the Red Sor-cerers appeared first as a puff of smoke. These were nice touches to an already fine game.

In short, get this one. You haven't played anything like it on your Intellivision yet. It's not lightning-fast arcade ac-tion, but it is truly one of the finest adventure video games I've ever played.

RATINGS:

Concept: New
Graphics/Sound: Good
Difficulty: Graduate
Interest: One Year

DONKEY KONG JUNIOR

From Coleco, for their Coleco-vision video game console.

DONKEY KONG JR. is the se-quel to DONKEY KONG (of course!). Coleco has trans-lated this original arcade classic for home play, for one or two players. In this game, Mario has finally captured the dreaded Kong. Kong's son, Don-key Kong, Junior, must rescue him.

Junior is moved left and right when the Coleco joystick is pushed in the corresponding direction. He climbs vines and chains when the joystick is pushed up and jumps when either side button is pressed.

The game is played on three different screens. In the first display, Junior must climb vines, jump on platforms or skip across islands to reach the cage where Mario is holding King. If he falls in the water or drops too far, he's a goner. Snapjaws roam the platforms and vines. These chomping creatures must be avoided or they will eliminate one Junior. If Junior can knock loose any fruit that hangs on the vines, they will slide down and eliminate any snapjaws directly below. If Junior safely reaches the top of the screen, he must jump up and grab the key that is hang-ing in front of Mario, to set his daddy free.

The second screen is made up of two large platforms and a number of vertical chains, hanging down like vines. Mario has daddy ape locked up in six chains this time, and the keys to the locks are hanging on the chains that dangle down below. In this display, Junior must jump up and grab the chains, then swing from one to the other, pushing each of the keys up the chains and to the locks at the top of the screen, to free his daddy of his shackles. The snapjaws roam up and down all the chains in the screen. They are also joined by nitpicker birds. These birds at first fly across the top of the screen, then lower and lower, always following a horizontal path. If they touch Junior, he's a goner. If Junior can drop a fruit on any snapjaw, the result is the same as it is in level one.

In the third display, Kong is again trapped by Mario, in a cage at the top of the screen. Junior starts out in the lower left-hand corner. He's got to work his way up, back and forth, to save his dad. First he must bounce off a jump board just in front of him, then up onto a platform, then onto a moving platform, to another stationary platform at the op-posite side of the screen. Here, he must grab one of two chains and climb up to another screen level, just above the first one, with another moving platform and two moving chains. Junior must use these aids to make his way to two chains at the other side of the screen then climb them, to yet another level, directly above his or-iginal starting point. To reach the top, Junior must again travel back across the screen, swinging along a line of short chains. Once Junior reaches the top, he must again jump and grab the keys to free his old man.

There are no snapjaws in this portion of the game, but there are a number of stooky-birds, which act a lot like the earlier nitpickers. These guys are a bit trickier and Junior has a much smaller space in which to avoid them. In skill levels two through four, the Stookybirds can drop eggs that will have the same affect on Junior as if the bird touches him.

If Junior can save his pop a third time, the cycle begins again, picking up speed and adding more nitpickers, stooky-birds and snapjaws. Skill lev-els may also be selected at the start of the game with the keypad controller.
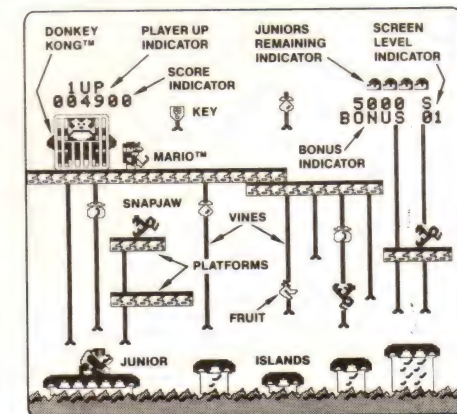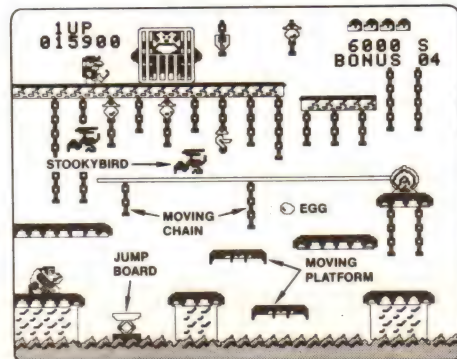
Gamers begin with five Jun-iors in skill levels one and five (for two players) and three in all the others. Jump-ing over any opponent earns the player 100 points, 300 points each if two or more opponents are jumped at the same time. Placing a key in a lock is worth 200 points. Picking a fruit is worth 400 points. Eliminating an opponent with falling fruit is worth 800, and each successive opponent elim-inated with the same fruit is worth 400 points more than the last. A bonus timer runs during the play, and any time re-maining at the end of a mission is added as points to the play-er's final score. A bonus Jun-ior can be earned by earning 10,000 points.

OPINIONS:

MIKE: If this game only had all the screens of the arcade orig-inal it would be a true classic for all time. I'm not so sure it isn't anyway. DONKEY KONG JR. is colorful and fun, with graphics that are superb throughout. Almost all the screens are here, and they are all true-to-arcade.

I did notice that this game is quite a bit simpler than DONKEY KONG. Maybe that's just me, but it does put a bit of a damper on the game, because DONKEY KONG comes with the console and everybody has it already.

Still, if you want an im-pressive sequel to one of your favorite home video games, this one will keep you happy for a long time to come, regardless of how easy it is to play it. You'll keep you coming back for more.

ALAN: I have to agree with Mike on DONKEY KONG JR.'s graphics. They are stupendous. And the movement of Junior is next-to-life all the way, whether he's running, jumping or climbing. I also agree that this one is easier to play than its pre-decessor, but I can't overlook this fact the way Mike did. Everyone does have DONKEY KONG already.

In short, I can heartily recommend DONKEY KONG JR. for kids and those of you who had too rough a time with DONKEY KONG. I can't recommend it for serious video game buffs. It will be fun for parties, but you'll only pull it out for company after the first month or so.

RATINGS:

Concept: Familiar
Graphics/Sound: Excellent
Difficulty: Beginner - Student
Interest: One Month - One Year

SID THE SPELLBINDER

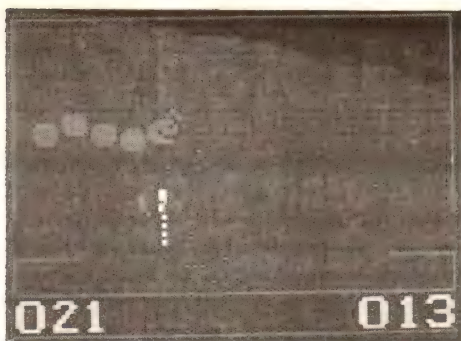**From N.A.P. Electronics, for their Odyssey II video game console.**

This is an educational ar-cade challenge, designed es-

pecially for ages six through ten, using the Odyssey voice synthesis module in conjunction with the joystick and mainframe alpha-numeric keyboard. Players must first take on SID, the giant snake-like spellbinder, in an arcade shooting battle, then correctly spell three voice-spoken words to gain more ammo and go at it again. The game is played by one player at a time, for the highest score.

SID is made up of ten segments, including his head. The player must blast him off the screen one segment at a time with a cannon that is slid back and forth across the bottom of the screen when the joystick is pushed to the left or right. Missiles are fired from the cannon when the red action button is pressed.

Each segment the player shoots is worth one more point than the last. If SID's head is destroyed, the first segment remaining will become his head as soon as he re-enters the screen. As long as the score is under 200 points, SID will re-

form the segments that are remaining into a solid snake when he re-enters the screen. When the score goes over 200 points, sections shot out of the giant slithering snake will remain separated when SID re-enters the screen, making those that remain even harder to hit.

SID gets closer and closer to the player's cannon as he crosses back and forth across the screen. If he isn't eliminated before he reaches the bottom, the creature will eat five of the player's missiles for every segment that remains. Players start out with thirty missiles in level one, and twenty in level two. When all the player's missiles are gone, the game is over.

If the player can eliminate SID, or if SID has eaten some of the player's bullets, but some still remain in reserve, a spelling round will follow.

In the spelling segment of the game, the voice will ask the player to spell three words, one at a time. Five missiles will be added to the player's reserve for each word correctly typed into the computer on the alpha-numeric keyboard.

Game play alternates between the arcade shooting match and the spelling bee, with SID moving faster and the words getting a bit harder every round, until the player runs out of bullets. The player with the highest score is the winner.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: SID THE SPELLBINDER is everything NIMBLE NUMBERS NED wasn't, and it's a good learning experience for kids, too. I had high hopes this pair of learning games would be the best educational/arcade combination ever devised, and the first release served the first half of the equation well — but it wasn't very much fun to play. In this sort of game, if the arcade portion isn't challenging and fun, much of the value of the educational portion will be lost.

The educational value of SID THE SPELLBINDER won't be lost. This second educational effort from Odyssey works just the way they hoped the first one would. The arcade game portion is very simple but demanding, and that's what kids need to keep them playing. The voice makes trying to spell the words fun, too. That's double-good.

This is an excellent game that utilizes the Voice of Odyssey and full keyboard well. Don't expect it to keep an adult happy — it's strictly for kids. But the kids will really like it.

MIKE: This is an interesting combination of arcade and education, done very well. Odyssey has brought us a good game that requires fast reactions to the screen (though, sometimes, it's too fast for the intended market), along with a really nice spelling game that shows off their voice unit.

The game does have a few drawbacks, though they re-

present nothing new when you are dealing with a computerized voice module. The problem is the fact that it's often hard to tell what word the voice is asking the player to spell. After the first couple of times through the game, however, this problem quickly resolves itself, as one becomes familiar with the way the various words are pronounced.

Besides, we have to keep in mind who this game was designed for. My youngest liked this one a lot. Since she is only seven, the game was at first too hard for her to play, even though she knew how to spell most of the words, but she caught on quickly and had a lot of fun with it. I can only give SID THE SPELLBINDER her seal of approval and a good rating from me, for the market that it was intended.

RATINGS:
Concept: Original
Graphics/Sound: Good
Difficulty: Novice
Interest: One Year

ROYAL DEALER

From Mattel Electronics, for their Intellivision and Intellivision II Master Component video game systems, and for Sears' Super Video Arcade.

ROYAL DEALER is a computer card match for one player at a time, offering four different

games on one cartridge. The player may choose between Crazy Eights, Rummy, Gin Rummy and Hearts, and play against one, two or three computer-controlled on-screen opponents.

The keypad overlay features four suit keys and keys for "up card," "gin," "pass," and "enter," in addition to four numbered keys, for selecting the game to be played. Either top side button is used to play a card or discard one. The two bottom side buttons are used to rearrange the player's hand.

The opening display shows a table with one, two or three nice-looking ladies around the opposite three sides. The player's hand is always displayed across the bottom edge of the screen. The computer-controlled players' cards aren't displayed until they are played.

One of the player's cards will be blue. The blue card is covered by the cursor, which is moved from card to card when the gamer presses on the right or left-hand side of the controller disc.

To rearrange a card, the player must move the cursor to select it, then press the lower right side button, marked "rearrange." This will move the selected card up out of the displayed hand. Pressing on the disc will then move the selected card right or left, to the desired new position, where pressing the "rearrange" button will re-insert the card back into the deck.

All the player's scores are displayed across the top of the screen. The gamer's score is white and the scores of the computer-controlled opponents match the color of their clothing.

The first hand is dealt as soon as the game begins. In all games, the first player to reach 100 points wins the game. Computer controlled opponents make their plays automatically. When it's the gamer's turn, all action waits for him or her to play.

The four games offered on ROYAL DEALER appeal to a variety of tastes. Virtually everyone who can read must know how to play "Crazy Eights," and the rules for the video version are the same as for the original card game.

The "draw" button is used to draw a card from the deck and the "discard" button is used to throw out an unmatching card. Suit keys are used to declare the suit. "Enter" must be pressed after a suit has been selected to change suit. The number of cards remaining in each computer-controlled player's hand is displayed directly below their score. Players going out score 20 points, plus one point for each card remaining in the other players' hands.

The rules for Intellivision
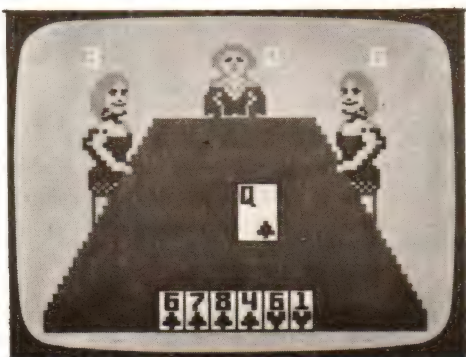
"Rummy" are also just like the real card game. To take the up card on the table, the player presses the "up card" key. Pressing the "draw" button will draw one card from the deck. The "discard" button throws one card out. You can guess what the "declare Gin" button does. The first player to declare a legal "Gin" earns 20 points. All the other players receive 20 points if any player declares an illegal "Gin."

"Gin Rummy" is played agaist only one computer-controlled opponent, with 10 cards in the opening hands, rather than seven. Otherwise, the rules, scoring and screen features are basically the same as those for "Rummy."

"Hearts" can also be played on this new cartridge, by the same rules as used for the regular card game. Players avoid taking points. Each heart is worth one point, the Queen of Spades is worth 13 points and all the other cards have no value. The player may be instructed to pass three cards at the start of a hand, also receiving three cards from another player. If a player can take all of the hearts and the Queen of Spades, he or she gets no points and all the others get 26. The game continues until one player has accumulated 100 points. The player with the lowest score wins. Passing or playing a card is accomplished by selecting the card with the disc, then pressing the "discard" button. The player's hand is automatically arranged by suit, so rearranging in this game in unnecessary.

OPINIONS:

ALAN: I had a lot of fun reviewing this cartridge, because I like to play cards and rarely have the time to arrange a gathering to do so. Now you can play these four games against your Intellivision console right on your TV -- when you want for as long as you want. Please bear in mind, while reading Mike's review below, that I'm not that good a player of any of these games, so I'm not exactly what I would call a tough opponent for the computer.

In addition to the fact that these particular card games are new to the video screen, I was also pleased with the display. I appreciated the fact that Mattel adhered so well to the original rules and was happy to see the ease with which the games can be learned and played. If you like any of these card games, I'd say buy ROYAL DEALER. It's just one more example of how video games can make life a bit easier. I can't wait for Intellivision "Pitch" and "Cribbage."

MIKE: I looked forward to playing ROYAL DEALER because I liked Mattel's BLACKJACK/POKER game that comes with the console. I've always enjoyed a good card game. After seeing it, I wasn't as excited as I thought I would be. For the most part, you don't have to be really good to beat the computer playing these games. That was a disappointment.

The play is a little slower than I had hoped for, too. It seems to take forever before

the cards are dealt. Still, this is the only complaint I have as far as the play action goes. My main worry is the ease with which I quickly and repeatedly beat the computer. I had hoped for more of a challenge.

Even though this might present a problem for the more jaded gamers amongst us, ROYAL DEALER is a great training tool for the younger folks in your house who are trying to learn the games. They might need some help with the rules at first, but they do catch on quickly and the cartridge provides a nice change from the usual high speed frantic action of some of the other games. It's too bad there wasn't a two-player mode, but you can't have everything. Take a good look at this one, but don't expect a serious contest.

micro quips

READERS!!!

Now you can be a video game critic, too. Mike and I have always felt that no two gamers view a new -- or old favorite -- release the same way. That's why we both review all the new games. But we still don't feel that's enough. We want to hear what you think of them, too. You get a chance to play a game a lot longer than Mike and I do. You know which ones will really hold your interest and give you your money's worth. That's why we've created this new column. "Microquips" is where you can read what the readers thought about the games you might want to buy -- sometimes before we get around to reviewing them, and we need your input if this is to be the kind of column we want it to be. So -- send us your mini-reviews. Keep them brief and they'll have a better chance of running. The best mini-review each month will earn the submitter $10 and all others that see print will earn a one-month subscription extension.

INTELLIVISION:

I like Intellivision because of its great sports games, superb graphics and realism. I do think it is lacking, though, in fast action games such as Atari's DEFENDER, but clearly it is a much better system. One of my favorite games is B-17 BOMBER, an Intellivoice cartridge. It puts you in the cockpit of a WW II bomber flying missions over Europe. It's an intense game of strategy mixed with action as you fight off enemy planes that weaken your bomber. The voice doesn't really add to the game, but this is still one of Mattel's best.

—David Kraemer
3102 Landfall Lane
Annapolis, MD 21403

$10.00
WINNER! 6 VCS GAMES:

DRAGONSTOMPER: Interesting, enjoyable, challenging. Only

one problem: not enough reward for defeating the dragon. It seems another load could have been added for this purpose.

Activision's ICE HOCKEY & TENNIS: Nice two-player action, but the computer's a push-over.

JAWBREAKER: A good gobble-em-up game with better graphics than Atari's PAC-MAN.

TRICK SHOT: Nice graphics, realistic action. A nice change of pace from shoot-em-ups.

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK: Should have been renamed "Frustration."

—Howard Fath
Rt. 1 Box 224
Theodore, AL 36582

4 FOR THE VCS:

MS. PAC-MAN: Possibly the best game Atari has ever turned out for the 2600. Very close to the actual arcade version. Everything they advertised is there, including great joystick response. Only drawback: it's a one-player-only game.

TURMOIL: A unique shoot-em-up game with frantic, constant action. Arcade-style graphics and sounds combined with escalating game difficulty makes this one a constant challenge, almost impossible to master. Well worth buying!

FAST EDDIE: The best climbing game for the 2600, with arcade-style graphics. Nine prizes must be grabbed on each screen by going up and down ladders while avoiding the stomping sneakers. This game is very challenging, though, perhaps, it gets too challenging. It should provide hours of fun for climbing freaks.

NEXAR: A 3-D space game from the cockpit point-of-view, featuring frantic game-play similar to Atari's arcade game, TEMPEST. This game has 99 difficulty levels and most people will not get past level 15. Spectravision has even added their own pause feature to ease frayed nerves and sweaty palms. One of the best games for any system.

—Bill Dibble
858 Seventh Ave.
Troy, NY 12182

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BOXING	BRIDGE	BEANY BOPPER	COSMIC SWARM	BERZERK
BREAKOUT	BUGS	COSMIC CREEPS	DARK CAVERN	CARNIVAL
CASINO	CHINA SYNDROME	CROSS FIRE	DARTS	CATCH
CIRCUS ATARI	COCONUTS	DEADLY DUCK	FROG POND	CHOPPER COMMAND
DODGE 'EM	ENCOUNTER AT L-5	DEMONS TO DIAMONDS	GORF	COSMIC AVENGER
FISHING DERBY	FIRE FIGHTER	DISHASTER	ICE HOCKEY	DEFENDER
HANGMAN	FREEWAY	FAST FOODS	LOCK 'N' CHASE	DEMON ATTACK
HAUNTED HOUSE	GOPHER ATTACK	FROGS & FLIES	MINES OF MINOS	EARTH WORLD
MAZE CRAZE	I WANT MY MOMMY	GANGSTER ALLEY	PLANET PATROL	FAST EDDIE
MISSILE COMMAND	LOST LUGGAGE	INFILTRATE	REALSPORTS BASEBALL	FIREWORLD
SKIING	MATH GRAND PRIX	JAWBREAKERS	REALSPORTS FOOTBALL	GRAND PRIX
SNEAK N PEEK	MAZE CHASE	KABOOM	REALSPORTS VOLLEYBALL	HIGH SEAS
SPACE CHASE	NUMBER ZAPPER	KING KONG	RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX	INTERNATIONAL SOCCER
STARSHIP	RIVER PATROL	KYPHUS	RIVER RAID	JEDI ARENA
STAR VOYAGER	SKYJINX	MARAUDER	ROOM OF DOOM	LADY BUG
SUPERMAN	SLOT MACHINE	MEGAFORCE	SEA QUEST	MOUSE TRAP
WARLORDS	SPACE INVADERS	SHARK ATTACK	SPACE ATTACK	PAC MAN
	SPACE MAZE	SPACE CAVERN	SPIDER FIGHTER	RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK
	SSSNAKE	SQUOOSH	STRONGHOLD	SMURF
	STAMPEDE	TENNIS	SUPER CHALLENGE BASEBALL	STAR MASTER
	SURVIVAL RUN	THRESHOLD	SUPER CHALLENGE FOOTBALL	STAR RAIDER
	TANKS BUT NO TANKS	TOWERING INFERNO	WIZARD OF WOR	STAR WARS
	TAPE WORM	TURMOIL	WORD ZAPPER	SUPERBREAKOUT
	TRICK SHOT	WABBIT		TRON DEADLY DISKS
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	VIDEO PINBALL			WATER WORLD
	WEIRD BIRD			YARS REVENGE

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5. Follow mailing instructions and fill in the ordering information.

Trade Prices

All prices include shipping, handling and insurance.

		I AM TRADING IN			
Group	A	B	C	D	E
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E	$14	$13	$12	$11	$8

EXAMPLE: you want to receive "SPIDER FIGHTER" from group D (LEFT SIDE) and wish to trade in "ASTEROIDS" from group B (TOP SIDE). Your total trade price is $11.00.

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ATARI®
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logical inquirer

Dear Alan and Mike:

Here's some tips on beating CBS' **WIZARD OF WOR**: After shooting the Worluk, you might run into the Wizard. If so, head for a set of horizontal lines and place yourself between them. Another set of lines will form a vertical corridor on either side of your hiding place. The Wizard will race up and down these vertical hallways. The horizontal lines will help protect you from his barrage of missiles, while allowing you to fire left or right at him.

The only drawback is that the Wizard may flash into that set of lines, just as you enter. If so, your man is dead. This is especially true in later encounters, or when you play a few games in a row (I myself usually play it 30 minutes at a time). As long as you have the cartridge in, the VCS memory stores your moves and uses them against you. But,

once you settle into your "hiding spot," you're safe until your man leaves the protection of those lines.

The Wizard often races up and down the side opposite the one you are firing at, so you must fire constantly and be quick, if you want to nail him when you change directions and fire.

In some mazes, the bottom line is shorter than the top one. This is ok to use, but your man must not stray past the edges of the lower line for a second or the Wizard will get you.

Best of luck

—**David Jenkins**
Flushing, NY

((Thanks for the excellent tips, David. This is just the sort of thing we like to run in The Logical Inquirer, along with questions to stump the experts! I know first-hand you

really are familiar with this game and your tips show it. —ARB))

Dear Alan and Mike:

I think we have found a quirk in Colecovision's **LADY BUG** cartridge (for Colecovision). While playing 2-player **LADY BUG** on the easiest level (#5), my daughter lost all her ladybugs at around 60,000 points. I continued to play my remaining ladybugs. When my score was between 300,000 and 400,000 and I lost a ladybug (I still had more in reserve), the partial maze flashed on the screen with "Player No. 2 GAME OVER," but my daughter could not move her ladybug around the maze again anyway. When she lost her ladybug, I played my turn normally. When I lost one again, the same thing happened. This continued until I had lost all of my ladybugs. Then it was my daughter's turn again, but the maze was complete this

time, normal in every way but one: she had unlimited ladybugs. Every time she lost one it was replaced with another. We both continued playing, using her controller, until we rolled the score over, and probably could have gone on forever. The Level Number was 60 when we finally shut the machine off and quit.

Well! Thanks for listening. I really can't believe I finally wrote this letter. I really love THE LOGICAL GAMER. The next best thing to playing video games is reading about them in your paper.

—Linda Shadwick
Denver, Iowa

((—And the next best thing to reviewing new games and putting out THE LOGICAL GAMER is getting letters like yours, Linda. They make me pull out an old favorite that I haven't had time to play in a while and try it over again. I had a similar situation happen when I was playing the game with my wife one night, but we didn't try carrying it as far as it would go, so I assumed it was a one-time quirk. Keep playing those games, keep reading THE LOGICAL GAMER and keep writing! —ARB))

Starting with our next issue, we'll be paying $10 for the best game tip submitted and run in "The Logical Inquirer."

Now — you know what we're looking for. Send it in!

NEW ACTIVISION GAMES...From Page Three

dressed right out of the roaring 20's in dress blues and bowler hat. Brandishing his billy club, he scampers after Harry Hooligan, a bewhiskered bad-guy in convict stripes.

Keystone Kelly confronts some unlikely obstacles during his swift pursuit. As the game progresses, the action gets tougher. See our review of the game, in this issue's "Binary

Visions," for a complete description and opinions.

KEYSTONE KAPERS should now be available at retail outlets, selling for a suggested price of $31.95.

Carol Shaw's **HAPPY TRAILS** is a unique video game for one or two players which "combines the color, humor and excitement of a chase through the Wild West with the mental skill and

strategy of a chess game."

Shaw specializes in game play, as proven by her first Activision release, **RIVER RAID**, which has become one of their top-selling titles of 1983.

HAPPY TRAILS has three major elements — a chase, an increasingly complex puzzle and humor. The bounty hunter (a white ten-gallon hat with legs) moves around a maze of trails, chasing Black Bart (a black ten-gallon hat with boots) and picking up money bags along the way. A red sheriff's badge can also be picked up, temporarily deputizing the bounty hunter and allowing him to "take" Black Bart, if he can catch up to him before the power of the badge wears off. The object of the game is to collect all the money and nab the bandit before time runs out.

This sounds simple enough, until the bounty hunter gets caught in the depths of the not-so-happy trail. The Badlands are a rectangle filled with blocks of different trail configurations, with one of the blocks missing. With nine types of blocks, each with a different trail configuration, there are thousands of possible moves in HAPPY TRAILS. In addition, the Badlands grow from a 2 X 2 block puzzle at the easiest level to a 5 X 8 block puzzle at the most difficult level.

The player must create a trail that leads to the money bags and Black Bart by rearranging the blocks, sliding them quickly to the left and right, and up and down, so the bounty hunter stays on the path. The speed and direction of the on-screen hero are also controlled by the player. The bounty hunter loses one of his four lives if he runs into a dead end or an empty space, or if he touches Black Bart before he's deputized.

HAPPY TRAILS is designed for use with Mattel's Intellivision and similar systems. Set to retail for a suggested price of $34.95, the game should already be available.

NEWS BRIEFS...From Page 3

electronic circuitry known as GROM (graphics read only memory). Reports have it they will not make the technology available to any other companies, keeping independents from producing games for the system without a previous royalty agreement with the firm. Milton Bradley and Disney Productions have already agreed to the arrangement.

***Meanwhile, a defect recently discovered in Texas Instruments' TI-99/4A home computer and the resulting voluntary program to correct it are expected to lead to a pre-tax profit loss of $50 million during the first quarter of this year. The defect was alleged to create a potential for shock to the user, due to a flaw in the system's power transformer. To request a free replacement adapter, owners can call 800-527-3550.

***Timex Corporation has lowered the price of their Sinclair 1000, to a retail price of $69.95. A $15 rebate offered until the end of April brought the final consumer cost down to $55 for a short time.

***Thorne EMI Home Video's software division has announced that they are looking for original computer games, and will buy marketing rights to those they find with possiblities. Contact: Thorn EMI Home Video, HCE Development, 1370 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019.

***Spectravideo has rolled out another new home computer system, the SV-328, an upgraded version of their first entry into the home computer field, the SV-318. The new unit will boast a 64k RAM capability and will be targeted for the small business segment of the market. Their earlier SV-318 is just now hitting limited retail markets, and is slated for full-scale national distribution by the end of June, retailing for a suggested $299.95.

***Three of Telesys' present VCS-compatible games, **FAST FOOD**, **COSMIC CREEPS** and **DEMOLITION HERBY**, will be released this July for the Atari 400/800/1200XL series home computers. **RAM IT** and **FAST FOOD** will also be released for the Commodore VIC-20 late in the third quarter. "We are also looking at the Timex/Sinclair and Commodore 64 as possibilities for future realeases," explained Jack Woodman, Vice President of marketing. Telesys will also be releasing another new title for the VIC-20, which will be shown at this summer's Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago.

***The votes are in and it's official. CHOPLIFTER!, from Broderbund Software, is number one — twice. According to a survey conducted of Apple II owners by Softalk Magazine, CHOPLIFTER! is the most popular Apple computer program of 1982, as well as the best game of the year. The awards were presented to Broderbund by Softalk Magazine at the West Coast Computer Faire in March. CHOPLIFTER! was written by Dan Gorli and has been a best-selling game for Broderbund since it was introduced last May.